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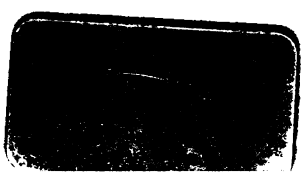

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VOL. III.

CONTAINING

TWENTY YEARS AFTER;

OR,

The Further Feats and Fortunes of a Gascon Adventurer.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF

ALEXANDER DUMAS.

LONDON:
BRUCE AND WYLD, 84, FARRINGDON STREET.

1846.

TWENTY YEARS AFTER;

OR,

THE FURTHER FEATS AND FORTUNES

OF

A GASCON ADVENTURER.

BEING A SEQUEL TO

"THE THREE MUSKETEERS."

BY ALEXANDER DUMAS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH,

BY WILLIAM BARROW, A.M.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

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1846.

KE 1931

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

The Sequel to "The Three Musketeers," as presented in the following pages, will be found even still more interesting than the celebrated work of which it is a continuation. The chief actors in the tale, now of a more mature age, yet retaining all the vigour and freshness of their original characters, are found engaged in the more grave and serious political events of the age in which they lived; and having laid aside the freaks and follies of youth, they now appear under a different phasis, but one which, in the translator's opinion, will be found much more attractive.

The work itself, too, is of a far higher grade than its predecessor: it is, in fact, a perfect historical romance; and the manners it delineates are true pictures of the times it represents. Low and debased as was our own national scale of morality in the seventeenth century, that of France was infinitely worse; and the profligate priest, and the fascinating but unprincipled coquette, depicted in the characters of the Abbé d'Herblay and Madame de Chevreuse, are drawn from life. The French possess numerous Memoirs relating to all the persons of note, in every rank of life, and of every period. From these sources M. Dumas has drawn largely; and the facts he relates are doubtless genuine, however singular they may appear to us, in these our happier days of a purer morality. They must, therefore, be received as useful moral lessons, which are intended to instruct the mind, without being in the slightest degree either offensive or indelicate.

The place so prominently occupied in "The Three Musketeers" by the famed Cardinal Richelieu, is, in the present work, filled by that of

his celebrated successor, Cardinal Mazarin, whose character is portrayed with equal fidelity, and the most strict historical truth.

The present work contains a quantity of matter equivalent to eight volumes of our ordinary English novels; but notwithstanding this unusual extension, the attention of the reader is never permitted to flag: he is carried onward by the rapid current of events, and the constant succession of incidents; and when at length he arrives at the conclusion, his only feeling of regret is, that he cannot still further trace the progress of those "feats and fortunes" which have hitherto yielded him so much amusement.

It is said that M. Dumas is engaged upon a further sequel, under the title of "Ten Years More." Should this be the case, and the work be found to possess those characteristics which distinguish "The Three Musketeers," and "Twenty Years After," it will find a place in the present series.

W. B.

June, 1846.

TWENTY YEARS AFTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE SHADE OF RICHELIEU.

In an apartment of the Palais Cardinal, with which we are already acquainted, near a table with vermilion corners, covered with papers and books, sat a man, with his hands supporting his head.

Behind him was an enormous chimney, red with fire, whose burning brands were crumbling on the large gilded andirons. The light of the fire fell upon the back part of the splendid garment of this meditative personage, which was at the same time illumined in front by a chandelier filled with wax candles.

On beholding that red simar with its rich lace, that pale brow furrowed by thought, the solitude of that cabinet, the silence of the antechambers, and the measured steps of the guards on the landing-place, one might almost have imagined that the shade of Richelieu was in the apartment.

And, truly, it was in effect only the shade of that great man. France enfeebled, the authority of the king disregarded, the nobles become weak and turbulent, the enemy within the frontiers—everything, in short, declared that Richelieu himself was no longer there.

But what testified, even more than all this, that the red simar was not that of the old cardinal, was the complete isolation, which, as we have said, resembled that of a phantom, more than of a living being. It was those corridors without courtiers, those courts full of guards—it was that sentiment of mockery, which arose from the street, and penetrated into this chamber, actually shaken by the

breath of a whole city, leagued against the minister—lastly, it was the distant sound of unceasing firing, happily without object or results, but merely to show the guards and Swiss, the musketeers and soldiers, who surrounded the Palais Royal—(for even the Palais Cardinal had changed its name)—that the people also had arms.

This shade of Richelieu, was Mazarin.

But Mazarin was now alone, and he felt that he was weak.

"Foreigner!" he murmured—"Italian! Ah! that is the reproach they cast in my teeth! With that word they assassinated and hanged Concini; and, if I allowed them, they would in like manner assassinate and hang me; although I have never done them any other injury than to oppress them a little. The fools! They do not perceive that this Italian, who speaks bad French, is not their enemy, but those rather who have the talent to make fine speeches to them, in a pure Parisian accent. Yes, yes," continued the minister, with his acute smile, which at this time appeared strange on his pale lips—"yes, your murmurs declare, that the lot of favourites is precarious. But, if you know that, you ought also to know, that I am not a mere common favourite. The Earl of Essex had a splendid ring, enriched with diamonds, which his royal mistress gave him. As for me, I have but a plain ring, with a cipher and a date; but this ring has been blessed in the chapel of the Palais Royal.* Therefore, they shall not destroy me at their will and pleasure. They do not perceive, that, with their eternal cry, of 'Down with Mazarin!' I make them sometimes cry, 'Long live M. de Beaufort,' sometimes 'Long live the prince,' and sometimes 'Success to the parliament.' Very well! M. de Beaufort is at Vincennes; the prince will join him there, some day or other; and the parliament——"

Here the cardinal's smile assumed an expression, of which his mild countenance appeared incapable.

"And the Parliament—well, the Parliament—we will see what we shall do with it. Of the Parliament—we have Orleans and Montargis. Oh! I will give it time enough: but those who have

* It is well known that Mazarin, having taken none of the orders which prevent marriage, had privately espoused Anne of Austria.

commenced with crying 'Down with Mazarin,' will finish by crying, 'Down with all those gentry.' Every one in his turn. Richelieu, whom they hated whilst he was living, and of whom they are always talking now that he is dead, was lower than I am; for he was frequently driven from power, and more frequently feared to be so. The queen will never discard me; and should I be obliged to give way to the people, she will give way with me. If I fly, she will fly also; and then we shall see what these rebels will do without their queen or their king. Oh! if I was not a foreigner! If I was but a Frenchman! If I was but a gentleman!"

And he relapsed into meditation.

In truth, his position was extremely difficult, and the day which had just passed, had much increased it. Mazarin, always spurred on by his sordid avarice, overwhelmed the people with taxes; and this people, who had nothing left but their soul, (as the Attorney-General Talon said, and *that* he could not sell by auction;)—this people, whom they endeavoured to tranquillize by the rumour of victories, from whose laurels they found they could extract no nutritious food—this people had long since begun to murmur.

But this was not all. For when it is only the people that complains, divided as it is into citizens and gentry, the court never hears of it. But Mazarin had been so imprudent as to attack the magistrates. He had sold twelve appointments of masters of requests; and as these officers paid very dear for their commissions, and as the addition of these new members lowered the emoluments of the others, they had united, and sworn on the gospels that they would not submit to this augmentation of their number, and that they would resist all the persecutions of the court—mutually agreeing, that, if any one of them should lose his office through his rebellion, the rest would subscribe and make up his loss.

In this situation were affairs between the two parties.

On the seventh of January, seven or eight hundred merchants of Paris had assembled, and objected to a tax which the government wished to impose on all owners of houses; and they had deputed ten of their number to lay their grievance before the Duke of Orleans, who, according to his old habits, courted popularity. The

Duke of Orleans had received them, and they had assured him that they were determined not to pay this new tax, even if they were obliged to defend themselves by force against the king's officers, who might attempt to collect it. The Duke of Orleans had listened to them with great complaisance, had given them reason to hope for some remission, had promised to speak to the queen in their favour, and had dismissed them with the ordinary expression of princes—"We shall see."

On their side, on the ninth, the masters of requests had gone to the cardinal; and one of them, who spoke for the others, had talked to him with such boldness and resolution, that the cardinal was quite astonished. He had therefore dismissed them, saying, as the Duke of Orleans had done—"We shall *see*."

Then, in order *to see*, they had assembled the council, and had sent for d'Emery, the superintendent of finances.

This d'Emery was greatly detested by the people; first, because he was the superintendent of finances, and that every superintendent of finances ought to be detested; and then, it must be said, because he also deserved a little to be so.

He was the son of a banker of Lyons, who was named Particelli, and who, having changed his name after a bankruptcy, caused himself to be called d'Emery. The Cardinal de Richelieu, who had discovered great financial talents in him, had introduced him to Louis XIII. under the name of M. d'Emery, and wished him to be appointed superintendent of the finances. He spoke very highly of him.

"Ah! so much the better," the king replied. "I am very glad that you have spoken to me of M. d'Emery for this place, which requires an honest man. I was told that you would push forward that rascal Particelli, and I feared that you would oblige me to take him."

"Ah, sire," replied the cardinal, "your majesty may make yourself perfectly easy: the Particelli of whom you speak was hanged!"

"So much the better," answered the king. "It is not for nothing, therefore, that I am called Louis the Just." And he signed the nomination of M. d'Emery.

It was this same d'Emery who was now the superintendent of finances.

He had been sent for to the council; and he hastened thither, pale and frightened, affirming that his son had, that very day, narrowly escaped assassination in the Place du Palais. The mob had met him, and had reproached him with the luxury of his wife, who had an apartment hung with red velvet, with gold fringe. She was the daughter of Nicolas Lecamus, who had been secretary to the king in 1617, who entered Paris with twenty livres, and who, whilst he reserved forty thousand livres of rent for himself, had just divided nine millions amongst his children.

D'Emery's son had been nearly smothered, one of the rioters having proposed to squeeze him until he had disgorged the gold which he had swallowed. The council determined nothing that day; the superintendent being too much occupied with that event to have his head very clear.

The next day, the first president, Mathew Molé, whose courage in all these affairs, says the Cardinal de Retz, equalled that of the Duke de Beaufort, and the Prince de Condé, that is to say, of the two men who were considered the bravest in France—the next day, the first president had been attacked in his turn. The people threatened to inflict upon him the evils which were inflicted on themselves. But the first president had replied with his accustomed tranquillity, without being either disturbed or surprised, that if the rioters did not obey the king's wishes, he would have gallows erected in all the squares, to hang incontinently the most mutinous amongst them. To which they had answered, that they desired nothing more than that gallows should be prepared, as they would serve to hang the unrighteous judges who purchased the favour of the court at the price of the people's misery.

Nor was this all. On the eleventh, the queen, going to mass at Notre-Dame, which she did regularly every Saturday, had been followed by more than two hundred women, crying out and demanding justice. They had not, however, any evil intentions, only wishing to throw themselves on their knees before her, to endeavour to excite her pity. But the guards prevented them; and the

queen passed by, haughty and stern, without attending to their clamours.

In the afternoon, another council was held. It was now determined to uphold the authority of the king, and, in consequence, the parliament was convoked for the next day, the twelfth.

On this day, during the evening of which we commence our new history, the king, who was then ten years old, and was just recovered from the small-pox, had, on the pretence of going to return thanks for his recovery at Notre-Dame, mustered his guards, his Swiss, and musketeers, who were stationed round the Palais Royal, on the Quais, and the Pont Neuf. After having heard mass, he had proceeded to the parliament, where, a court of judicature being suddenly held, he had not only maintained the edicts which had been passed, but had also enacted five or six new ones; "all," says the Cardinal de Retz, "more destructive the one than the other." So that the first president, who, as we have seen, was on the former sittings in favour of the court, boldly inveighed against this mode of bringing the king to the palace, unduly to influence their votes.

But the president Blancmesnil and the councillor Broussel were those who spoke the most forcibly against the new taxes.

These edicts being passed, the king returned to the Palais Royal. A vast multitude was collected on his route; but as it was known that he came from the parliament, and it was uncertain whether he had been there to render justice to the people, or to oppress them anew, not one single exclamation of joy broke forth to congratulate him on his recovery. On the contrary, every countenance was sullen and disturbed—some were even threatening.

Notwithstanding the king's return, the troops remained drawn up. They feared that some disturbance might break out, when the result of this sitting of the parliament was known. In fact, scarcely had the rumour been spread abroad, that, instead of lightening the imposts, the king had augmented them, before groups were formed, and the streets resounded with cries of "Down with Mazarin! Long live Broussel! Long live Blancmesnil!" For the people had heard that Broussel and Blancmesnil had spoken in their favour, and they

were not the less grateful for their eloquence, although it had proved futile.

Efforts had been made to disperse these groups, and to silence these cries; but, as always happens in such cases, the groups had increased, and the cries redoubled. The order had just been given to the royal and Swiss guards, not only to keep firm, but to establish patrols in the rue St. Denis and the rue St. Martin, where the mobs appeared to be the most numerous and animated, when the mayor was announced at the Palais Royal.

He was instantly admitted, and announced that unless these hostile demonstrations were immediately withdrawn, in two hours all Paris would be in arms.

They were deliberating on what was to be done, when Comminges, a lieutenant in the guards, entered, with his dress torn, and his face covered with blood. On seeing him thus enter, the queen uttered a scream of surprise, and demanded the cause.

He informed them, that, upon the appearance of the guards, as the mayor had foreseen, the minds of the people had become exasperated. They had taken possession of the bells, and sounded the tocsin. Comminges had kept his ground, had arrested a man who appeared to be a ringleader, and, to make an example, had ordered him to be hanged at the Cross du Trahoir. The soldiers dragged him away to execute this command; but, at the market-place, they were attacked with stones and halberds; and the rebel, taking advantage of this, had made his escape, gained the rue Tiquetonne, and had there thrown himself into a house, of which the doors had been immediately forced.

This violence, however, had been fruitless, as they had not been able to find the culprit. Comminges had left a piquet in the street, and, with the remainder of his detachment, had returned to the Palais Royal, to give an account of what had passed to the queen. During his whole progress, he had been followed by cries and threats; several of his men had been wounded by stones and halberds; and he himself had been struck by a stone which had cut open his eyebrow.

This account of Comminge's corroborated that of the mayor. They were not, however, in a situation to make head against a serious

revolt; and therefore the cardinal caused intelligence to be spread amongst the people, that the troops were only drawn up on the Quais and the Pont Neuf on account of the ceremony, and were forthwith to be withdrawn. In fact, about four o'clock in the afternoon, they were all directed towards the Palais Royal. One post was established at the Barrier des Sergents; another at Quinze Vingts; and a third at the end of St. Roch. They filled the courts and the ground floor with Swiss and musketeers, and resolved to await the result.

And this was the state of affairs when we introduced our readers into the Cardinal Mazarin's cabinet, which had formerly been that of Cardinal Richelieu. We have seen the state of mind in which he listened to the murmurs of the people, which penetrated even to his ears, and to the firing, which resounded even in his chamber.

Suddenly he raised his head, with a slight frown upon his brow, like a man who has made his decision, and fixing his eyes on an enormous clock, which had just struck six, he took up a vermilion whistle, which was placed within his reach on the table, and sounded it twice.

A concealed door in the tapestry opened silently, and a man, dressed in black, softly entered the room and placed himself behind the cardinal's chair.

"Bernouin," said the cardinal, without even turning his head—for having whistled twice, he knew it must be his valet de chambre—"what musketeers are on guard at the palace?"

"The black musketeers, your excellence!"

"What company?"

"Company of Treville."

"Is there any officer of that company in the antechamber?"

"Lieutenant d'Artagnan."

"A good officer, I believe?"

"Yes, your excellence."

"Give me the uniform of a musketeer, and assist me to dress."

The valet left the room as softly as he had entered it, and returned a moment after, bringing the dress required.

The cardinal then began, silent and pensive, to divest himself of

the dress of ceremony which he had worn at the sitting of the Parliament, and to put on the military coat, which, thanks to his ancient campaigns in Italy, he wore with somewhat of graceful ease. Then, when he was completely dressed, he said—

"Go for M. d'Artagnan."

And the valet this time left the room by the middle door, but as silent and mute as ever. One would have said that he was a ghost.

Being left alone, the cardinal looked at himself in the glass with some satisfaction. He was yet young, for he was scarcely forty-six years old. He was of an elegant figure, rather above the common height. His complexion was good, his eye full of fire; the nose large, but well proportioned; the forehead broad and majestic; his hair was chestnut and slightly curling; the beard was darker than his hair, and well raised and graceful. Then he looked at his belt, and at his hands, which were very handsome, and of which he took the greatest care. Then rejecting the large military gloves of buckskin, he took a pair of silk ones. At this moment the door opened.

"M. d'Artagnan," said the valet.

An officer entered the room. He was a man of about thirty-nine or forty years of age; not tall, but slender, and extremely well made; his eye quick, and full of talent; his beard black, and his hair slightly gray, as is always the case, when any one has lived too well, or not well enough, and more especially when a man is of a very brown complexion.

D'Artagnan made four steps into the cabinet, which he recognised as that where he had once visited Richlieu; and now, seeing no one in it but a musketeer, in the dress of his own company, he fixed his eyes on this individual, and at the first glance, under the uniform, he discovered the person of Cardinal Mazarin.

He remained standing in a respectful but graceful attitude, and as became a man, who, in the course of his life, had often found himself in the presence of the great.

The cardinal fixed upon him an eye more acute than profound, examined him attentively; and then, after a few moments' silence, he said—

"You are M. d'Artagnan, I believe?"

"The same, your excellence," replied the officer.

The cardinal looked yet a moment longer at that head, so full of intelligence, at that countenance, so flexible and animated, whose excessive mutability had been chained down and repressed by years and experience. But d'Artagnan bore the examination like a man who had before been scrutinized by eyes far more piercing than those whose investigation he now sustained.

"Sir," said the cardinal, "you will come with me; or, rather, I am going with you."

"At your excellency's command," replied d'Artagnan.

'I wish personally to visit the posts which surround the Palais Royal. Do you believe that there will be any danger in it?"

"Danger! your excellence," demanded d'Artagnan: "and of what?"

"The people are reported to be in a state of mutiny."

"The uniform of the king's musketeers is much respected, your excellence; and, even if it were not so, I, being supported by four of my men, would engage to put to flight a hundred of these madmen."

"And yet you have seen what happened to Comminges?"

"M. Comminges belongs to the guards, not to the musketeers," said d'Artagnan.

"Which is as much as to say," replied the cardinal, smiling, "that the musketeers are better soldiers than the guards."

"Every one has a prejudice in favour of his own uniform, your excellence."

"Except myself, sir," replied Mazarin, smiling; "for you see that I have quitted my own, to assume yours."

"Plague on it! your excellence," said d'Artagnan, "that is modesty. As for me, I declare that had I that of your eminence, I should remain contented with it."

"Yes, but to go out with it this evening, it might not perhaps be quite so safe. Bernouin, my hat!"

The valet returned, bearing a uniform hat, with broad lace. The cardinal put it on in a jaunty manner, and turning to d'Artagnan—

"You have horses saddled in the stables, have you not?"

"Yes, your excellence."

"Well then, let us go."

"How many men does your excellence wish me to take?"

"You have said that with four men you would engage to put a hundred of these madmen to flight: therefore, as we might perchance meet two hundred, take eight."

"As your excellence pleases."

"I follow you. But by the way, not down here," continued the cardinal. "Give us light, Bernouin."

The valet brought a candle, the cardinal took a small key from his bureau, and having opened the door of a secret staircase, they soon found themselves in the court-yard of the Palais Royal.

CHAPTER II.

A NIGHT ROUND.

Ten minutes afterwards the little troop left the palace by the rue des Bons-Enfants, behind the theatre which the Cardinal de Richelieu had built for the performance of his play of *Mirame*, and in which the Cardinal Mazarin, a greater amateur of music than of literature, had caused the first operas to be produced that had ever been represented in France.

The aspect of the city presented every characteristic of extreme agitation. Numerous groups of men were running through the streets; and, in spite of all that d'Artagnan had said, stopped to see the soldiers pass, with an air of threatening mockery which indicated that the citizens had, for the time, laid aside their usual politeness for more warlike sentiments. From time to time, sounds were heard from the direction of the market-place. Dropping shots resounded from the rue St. Denis; and sometimes suddenly,

without any obvious cause, a bell began to toll, set in motion by the popular caprice.

D'Artagnan pursued his course with the indifference of a man upon whom such fooleries had no influence. When a group occupied the middle of the street, he pushed his horse through it without warning those who composed it to take care; and as, whether rebels or not, those who were assembled knew the kind of man they had to deal with, they gave way, and allowed the patrol to pass on. The cardinal envied this coolness, which he attributed to familiarity with danger; but he at the same time accorded to the officer, under whose charge he had for the time placed himself, that sort of consideration which even prudence itself pays to careless and inconsiderate courage.

On approaching the post at the Barrier des Sergents, the sentinel cried out—"Who goes there?"

D'Artagnan answered; and having demanded the pass-word of the cardinal, went forward. The pass-words were "*Louis* and *Rocroy*."

These signals being exchanged, d'Artagnan inquired whether M. de Comminges did not command this post? The sentinel pointed to an officer on foot, whose hand was resting on the neck of the horse of another individual, with whom he was conversing. He was the person for whom d'Artagnan inquired.

"M. de Comminges is there," said d'Artagnan, returning to the cardinal.

The cardinal directed his horse towards them, whilst d'Artagnan discreetly retired. Yet, by the way in which the two officers took off their hats, he perceived that they had at once recognised his eminence.

"Bravo, Guitaut!" said the cardinal to the horseman. "I perceive that, in spite of your sixty-four years, you are always the same—ever on the alert, and full of devotion. What were you saying to this young man?"

"Your excellence," replied Guitaut, "I was remarking to him, that we live at a singular period, and that this day much resembled one of those days of the league which I witnessed in my youth.

Do you know that they actually contemplated erecting barricades in the rue St. Denis, and the rue St. Martin?"

"And what did Comminges answer, my dear Guitaut?"

"Your excellence," said Comminges, "I answered, that, to make a league, one thing was wanting, which appeared to me very essential, and that was a Duke of Guise. Besides, the same thing is seldom done twice."

"No; but they will make a Fronde, as they call it," said Guitaut.

"And what is a Fronde?" asked Mazarin.

"It is the name that they give to their party, your excellence."

"And whence does this name arise?"

"It appears, that, some days ago, the Counsellor Bachaumont said, at the palace, that these rioters resembled the scholars who throw stones in the Paris ditches, and who run away when they see the lieutenant of the police, and reunite when he is gone by. They caught up this word at the rebound, as the beggars at Brussels did; and they have called themselves *frondeurs*. Yesterday, and to-day, everything is *à la Fronde*—the bread, the gloves, the fans, the muffs; and—there! listen now!"

At this moment, in fact, a window opened; a man placed himself at it, and began to sing:

"A breeze of the Fronde
Did this morning begin:
It roared and it groaned
Against Mazarin—
That breeze of the Fronde
The morning brought in!"

"The insolent rascal!" murmured Guitaut.

"Your excellence," said Comminges, whose wound had put him into a bad humour, and who was anxious to take his revenge—"shall I send a ball at that scoundrel, to teach him to sing out of tune?" And he put forth his hand to the holsters on his uncle's horse.

"No," no! exclaimed Mazarin. "*Diavolo!* my dear friend, you are going to spoil all. Things are, on the contrary, proceeding

marvellously well. I understand you Frenchmen as well as if I had made you, from the first to the last. They sing—therefore they will pay. During the time of the league, of which Guitaut was just now speaking, they only sang the mass. Come, Guitaut, come, let us go and see if they keep as good a look-out at Quinze-Vingts as they do at the Barrier des Sergents."

And saluting Comminges with his hand, he rejoined d'Artagnan, who again put himself at the head of his small troop, and was followed by Guitaut and the cardinal, who were themselves followed by the rest of the escort.

"That is true," murmured Comminges, looking at the cardinal's retiring figure. "I forgot that: provided they pay, it will be quite sufficient for him."

They resumed their course down the rue St. Honoré, making their way through groups of men, who were talking of the edicts passed that day, and complained that the young King was thus compelled to ruin his people without knowing it. They attributed all their distress to Mazarin; spoke of applying to the Duke of Orleans and the Prince; and landed Blancmesnil and Broussel.

D'Artagnan passed through the midst of these crowds as if he and his horse had been composed of iron. Mazarin and Guitaut conversed in a low tone; and the musketeers, who had at last discovered the cardinal, followed in silence.

They reached the rue St. Thomas du Louvre, where was the post of Quinze-Vingts. Guitaut called a subaltern, who came to make his report.

"Well?" demanded Guitaut.

"Ah, captain," said the officer, "everything goes on well in this quarter, except that I fancy something is taking place in that hotel."

And he pointed to a magnificent hotel, situated on the very spot where the Vaudeville now stands.

"Why that is the hotel Rambouillet," said Guitaut.

"I do not know whether it be the hotel Rahmbouillet," replied the officer; "but this I know, that I have seen a great many persons of very sorry appearance go into it."

"Bah!" said Guitaut, bursting out in laughter: "they are poets."

"Well, then, Guitaut," said Mazarin, "I will thank you not to speak so irreverently of these gentlemen. Do you not know, that I also was a poet in my youth, and made verses in the same style as those of M. de Benserade?"

"You, your excellence?"

"Yes, I. Would you like me to recite some of them to you?"

"I thank your excellence, but I do not understand Italian."

"Yes; but you understand French, do you not, my good and brave Guitaut?" replied the cardinal, placing his hand in a caressing manner on his shoulder; "and whatever order is given you in that language, you will execute it?"

"Without doubt, your excellence, as I have hitherto done—provided it comes from the queen."

"Ah, yes," said Mazarin, biting his lips; "I know that you are wholly devoted to her."

"I have been captain of her guards for more than twenty years."

"Forward, M. d'Artagnan!" cried the cardinal. "Everything is going on well in this quarter."

D'Artagnan took the head of the column without uttering a word, and with that passive obedience which characterizes an old soldier.

He proceeded towards the mound of St. Roch, where was the third post, passing through the rue Richelieu and the rue Vile-dot. It was the most solitary station, for it almost touched upon the ramparts, and the city was not thickly peopled in this quarter.

"Who commands this post?" demanded the cardinal.

"Villequier," replied Guitaut.

"The deuce!" said Mazarin. "Speak to him alone, then. You know that we are at variance ever since you received the order to arrest the Duke de Beaufort. He pretended that that honour belonged to him, as captain of the guards."

"I know it well, and I have told him a hundred times that he was wrong. The king could not have given him the order for at that time he was only four years old."

"True: but I could have given it to him, Guitaut; yet I preferred you."

Guitaut, without replying, pushed his horse forward, and making himself known to the sentinel, ordered him to summon M. de Villequier, who instantly made his appearance.

"Ah! is it you, Guitaut?" he said, in that ill-natured tone which was habitual with him. "What the deuce do you want here?"

"I come to ask you if there is anything fresh stirring here?"

"And what the plague would you have that there should be stirring here? They say 'Long live the king,' and 'Down with Mazarin!' That is nothing new: we have been accustomed to these cries for some time."

"And you join in chorus?" replied Guitaut, laughing.

"Faith, I have sometimes a great inclination to do so. I think that they are quite right, Guitaut. I would willingly give five years' pay to make the king five years older."

"Indeed! And what would happen if the king were five years older?"

"Why, the moment the king came to his majority, he would give his own orders; and there would be much more pleasure in obeying the grandson of Henry IV. than the son of Pietro Mazarin. For the king—death and the devil!—I would die with pleasure; but if I were killed for Mazarin, as your nephew narrowly escaped being to-day, the best place in Paradise would never console me for it."

'Well, well, M. de Villequier," said Mazarin, "make yourself easy: I will apprise the king of your devotion to him." Then turning towards the escort:

"Come, gentlemen," continued he, "all goes on well. Let us return."

"And so, Mazarin was there!" said Villequier. "Well, so much the better. I have long wished to tell him a bit of my mind. You have given me an opportunity, Guitaut; and although your motives were perhaps not the very best, still I thank you for it." And turning on his heels, he entered the guard-house, whistling an air of the Fronde.

Mazarin, however, returned very pensive. What he had successively heard from Comminges, Guitaut, and Villequier, confirmed his opinion, that, in case of any serious disturbance, he had no one to depend upon but the bueen; and even the queen had so often abandoned her friends, that, in spite of all the precautions he had taken, her support sometimes appeared to the minister very uncertain and precarious.

During the whole of this nocturnal expedition, that is to say, for about an hour, whilst he in turn studied Guitaut, Comminges, and Villequier, the cardinal had been examining one man. That man, who had remained perfectly unmoved before the popular threats, and whose countenance had not changed a muscle at the jokes which Mazarin himself had uttered, any more than at those of which he was the object—that man appeared to him to be a distinct and separate being, tempered and formed for the events which were passing at the present time, and more especially for those which were about to happen.

Besides, the name of d'Artagnan was not entirely unknown to him. And although Mazarin had not come to France until about the year 1634 or 1635, that is to say, seven or eight years after the events which we recounted in our preceding history, it appeared to the cardinal as if he had heard d'Artagnan's name mentioned as that of a man, who, in an affair, which he could no longer remember, had made himself conspicuous as a model of courage, address, and devotion.

This idea had taken such complete possession of his mind, that he was determined to satisfy himself concerning it without delay; but the information which he desired, must not be sought from d'Artagnan himself. The few words he had spoken had revealed to the cardinal his Gascon origin; and the Italians and Gascons know each other too well, and have too much resemblance, to apply to each other for information concerning themselves. Therefore, on reaching the walls which enclosed the garden of the Palais Royal, the cardinal rapped at a small door, situated nearly on the same spot where the café de Foy now stands, and, after having thanked d'Artagnan, and requested him to wait in the court of the Palais

Royal, he made a sign to Guitaut to follow him. They both dismounted, and throwing their bridles to the lacquey who had opened the door, they disappeared in the garden.

"My dear Guitaut," said the cardinal, leaning on the arm of the old captain of the guards, "you told me, just now, that you had been twenty years in the queen's service."

"Yes, it is true," replied Guitaut.

"Now, my dear Guitaut," continued the cardinal "I have remarked, that, besides your courage, which is indisputable, and your fidelity, which is incorruptible, you have an excellent memory."

"You have remarked *that*, your excellence," said the captain of the guards. "The deuce! So much the worse for me."

"And why so?"

"Doubtless, one of the best qualifications of a courtier, is to know how to forget."

"But you are not a courtier, Guitaut; you are a brave soldier—one of those captains of the time of Henry IV., of whom few now remain, and of whom, unfortunately, very soon none will be left."

"Plague take it, your excellence! have you brought me here to draw my horoscope?"

"No," said Mazarin, laughing. "I have brought you here, to ask you if you have observed our lieutenant of musketeers?"

"M. d'Artagnan?"

"Yes."

"I have no occasion to observe him, your excellence, having known him for a long time."

"What sort of a man is he, then?"

"Why," said Guitaut, surprised at the question—"he is a Gascon."

"Yes, I know that; but I would ask you whether he is a man to be trusted."

"M. de Treville much esteems him; and M. de Treville, you know, is a stanch friend of the queen's."

"I want to know whether he is a man who has been tried—"

"If you mean as a brave soldier, I think I may say yes. At the

siege of la Rochelle, at Suse, and at Perpignan, I have heard that he did more than his duty."

"But you know, Guitaut, that we poor ministers have often need of men who are something more than brave. We want men of talent. Was not M. d'Artagan mixed up in some intrigue, in the time of the cardinal, from which report says he extricated himself most skilfully?"

"As to that matter, your excellence," replied Guitaut, who saw clearly that the cardinal wished to draw him out—"I am obliged to tell your eminence, that it is impossible for me to know what public rumour has taught you. For my own part, I never interfered with any intrigues; and if I ever received any information concerning the intrigues of others, as the secret is not mine, your eminence will excuse me if I keep it for those who confided it to me!"

Mazarin shook his head. "Ah!" said he, "upon my word, there are some ministers fortunate enough to learn all they wish to know."

"That is, your excellence, because those ministers do not weigh all men in the same scale; and because they apply to men of the sword concerning war, and to men of intrigue for affairs of intrigue. Apply to some intriguer of the period you mention, and you will easily gain the information you require—that is to say, if you pay for it."

"Ah, by Jove!" replied Mazarin, making a certain grimace which always escaped him, when any one touched upon the question of money, in the sense in which Guitaut had mentioned it: "yes, it will be paid for—if there are no other means of obtaining it."

"And does your excellence seriously wish me to point out a man who has mingled in all the cabals of that period?"

"*Per Bacchio!*" replied Mazarin, who began to lose his temper, "for a whole hour I have been asking nothing else, iron-head that thou art!"

There is one for whom I can answer in that respect; that is to say, provided he will speak."

"That is my affair."

"Ah, your excellence, it is not always so easy to make people say what they do not wish to say."

"Bah! With patience it can be managed. Well, now, who is this man?"

"The Count de Rochefort."

"Ah! the Count de Rochefort?"

"Unfortunately, he has disappeared for four or five years, and I do not know what has become of him."

"I will find him out, Guitaut," said Mazarin.

"Then why did your eminence complain, just now, that you knew nothing?"

"And," said Mazarin, "you believe that Rochefort——"

"He was the cardinal's tool, your eminence; but I warn you that it will cost you dear. The cardinal was very prodigal to his creatures."

"Yes, yes, Guitaut," replied Mazarin; "he was a great man, but he had that fault. Thank you, Guitaut. I will take advantage of your advice, and that this very evening."

And as they had now reached the courtyard of the Palais Royal, the cardinal saluted Guitaut with a wave of his hand, and seeing an officer walking up and down, he went up to him. It was d'Artagnan, who was waiting, as the cardinal had commanded him.

"Come, M. d'Artagnan," said Mazarin, in his most melodious voice, "I have an order to give you."

D'Artagnan bowed, followed the cardinal up the secret staircase, and soon found himself in the same cabinet from whence he had set out.

The cardinal sat down before his desk, and took a sheet of paper, on which he wrote some lines.

D'Artagnan, standing immoveable, waited without impatience, as without curiosity. He had become a military automaton, acting, or rather obeying, as if by a spring.

The cardinal folded the letter, and sealed it. "M. d'Artagnan," said he, "you will take this dispatch to the Bastile, and bring back the person whom it concerns. You will take with you a carriage and an escort, and will carefully guard the prisoner."

D'Artagnan took the letter, put his hand to his hat, turned round on his heels, just as the most skilful drill-sergeant would have done,

and left the room; and a moment after, his brief and monotonous voice was heard, giving this command:—"An escort of four men —a carriage—my horse!"

Five minutes later, the sound of a carriage, and of the iron hoofs of horses, was heard on the pavement of the court.

CHAPTER III.

TWO OLD ENEMIES.

D'Artagnan reached the Bastile as it struck half-past eight. He caused himself to be announced to the governor, who, when he knew that he came with a direct order from the cardinal, advanced even to the steps to meet him.

M. de Tremblay was then governor of the Bastile. He was the brother of the famous Capucin Joseph, that terrible favourite of Richelieu, who was styled his Gray Eminence.

When the Marshal Bassompierre was in the Bastile, where he remained for upwards of twelve years, and when his companions, in their dreams of liberty, would say one to another, "As for me, I shall get out at such a time," and "I at such a time;" Bassompierre replied, "and I, gentlemen, shall go out when M. de Tremblay goes out." By which he meant, that when Richelieu died, M. de Tremblay would not fail to lose his place at the Bastile, and Bassompierre to resume his at court.

His prediction had nearly been fulfilled, but in a very different manner from what Bassompierre had expected; for, after the cardinal's death, contrary to all expectation, affairs went on as before. M. de Tremblay did not go out; and Bassompierre was very near not going out too.

M. de Tremblay was therefore still governor of the Bastile, when d'Artagnan presented himself there to execute the cardinal's order. He received him with the greatest politeness, and, as he was just going to place himself at table, he invited d'Artagnan to sup with him.

"I would do so with the greatest pleasure in the world," said d'Artagnan; "but, if I am not mistaken, there is written on the envelope of the dispatch, 'in great haste.'"

"That is true," said M. de Tremblay.—"Halloo there! major, bring down number 256."

On entering the Bastile, one ceased to be a man, and became a number.

D'Artagnan felt himself shudder at the sound of the keys. He therefore remained on horseback, without wishing to dismount, looking at the bars, the deep sunk windows, and the enormous walls, which he had never before seen, except from the other side of the trenches, and which had caused him so much fear some twenty years ago. A bell sounded. "I must leave you," said M. de Tremblay; "I am called to sign the order for the prisoner's departure. May we soon meet again, M. d'Artagnan!"

"May the devil fly away with me, if I respond to your wish!" muttered d'Artagnan, accompanying his imprecation with the most gracious smile: "I am quite ill with only remaining five minutes in the court. Come, come, I see that I would yet prefer dying on straw, of which there is some probability, to having an income of ten thousand livres as governor of the Bastile."

He had scarcely finished this soliloquy, when the prisoner made his appearance. On seeing him, d'Artagnan made a motion of surprise, which he immediately suppressed; and the prisoner entered the carriage, without appearing to have recognised d'Artagnan.

"Gentlemen," said d'Artagnan to his four musketeers, "I was ordered to keep the strictest watch over the prisoner. Therefore, as the carriage has no locks on its doors, I shall get into it with him. M. de Lillebonne, will you be so obliging as to lead my horse by the bridle?"

"Willingly, lieutenant," replied the musketeer he addressed.

D'Artagnan dismounted, gave the bridle of his horse to the musketeer, entered the carriage, placed himself near the prisoner, and, in a tone of voice in which it was impossible to discover the slightest emotion, said—"To the palace, at a trot."

The carriage moved on, and d'Artagnan, taking advantage of the

obscurity of the arch under which they were passing, threw himself on the prisoner's neck, exclaiming—"Rochefort! Is it really you? I am not mistaken!"

"D'Artagnan!" cried Rochefort, in his turn much astonished.

"Ah! my poor friend," continued d'Artagnan, "not having seen you for four or five years, I thought you were dead."

"Faith," said Rochefort, "there is not much difference, I imagine, between a dead man, and one who is buried. And I am buried, or what amounts to the same thing."

"And for what crime are you in the Bastile?"

"Do you wish me to tell you the truth?"

"Certainly."

"Well, then, I do not know."

"What, do you doubt me, Rochefort?"

"No, by the honour of a gentleman; for it is impossible that I can be there for the cause alleged.

"What cause?"

"As a night robber."

"You a night robber, Rochefort! You are jesting?"

"I imagine this requires some explanation—does it not?"

"Yes, I confess it does."

"Well, then, hear what happened. One evening, after a debauch at Reinard's in the Tuileries, with the Duke d'Harcourt, Fontrailles, de Rieux, and others, the Duke d'Harcourt proposed that we should go and pull off cloaks on the Pont Neuf: that is, you know, an amusement which the Duke of Orleans brought into fashion."

"And were you so foolish, Rochefort, at your age!"

"No; but I was intoxicated. And yet the amusement appeared to me to be mighty tame; so I proposed to the Chevalier de Rieux to be a spectator, rather than an actor, and, that we might view the spectcale from the first tier of boxes, to mount the Bronze Horse. No sooner said than done! Thanks to the spurs, which served as stirrups, in a moment we were mounted on the crupper: we were capitally placed, and saw charmingly. Four or five cloaks had been pulled off with unequalled dexterity, and without those from whom they had been taken having dared to say a word; when, I know not

what idiot, less patient than the others, bethought himself of calling for the guard and drew upon us a patrol of archers. The Duke d'Harcourt, Fontrailles, and the others escaped. De Rieux wished to do the same; but I held him back, saying that they would not spy us out, where we were. He would not listen to me, but placed his foot on the spur to descend. The spur broke; he fell, and broke his leg, and, instead of remaining quiet, cried out like a hanged dog. I wished to jump down, in my turn; but it was now too late, and I jumped into the arms of the archers, who carried me to the Chatelet, where I slept on this cursed wine, quite certain that I should be set at liberty the next day. But day after day elapsed, until eight had passed, and then I wrote to the cardinal. The same day, they came and took me to the Bastile, where I have now been these five years. Do you believe this is for having committed the sacrilege of mounting behind enry IV.?"

"No: you are right, my dear Rochefort; it cannot be for that. But probably you are now going to learn the cause."

"Ah, yes; for I had forgotten to inquire whither you are conveying me?"

"To the cardinal."

"What does he want with me?"

"I have not the least idea; for I did not even know that it was you for whom I was sent."

"Impossible. You, a favourite!"

"I a favourite!" exclaimed d'Artagnan. "Ah! my poor count, I am more a Gascon volunteer than I was when I first saw you at Meung—now full twenty-two years ago, alas!" And a deep sigh finished this exclamation.

"And yet you came here with a command."

"Merely because I happened by chance to be in the antechamber, and that the cardinal applied to me, as he would have done to any other. But I am still only a lieutenant of musketeers; and I have now been so about one-and-twenty years, if I calculate properly."

"But, after all, no misfortune has befallen you; which is saying much."

"And what misfortune would you have happen to me? As some

Latin verse says, which I have forgotten, or, rather, which I never knew correctly, the thunder never strikes the valley, my dear Rochefort; and I am one of the lowest in the world."

"Therefore the Mazarin is still Mazarin?"

"More than ever so, my dear friend. They say that he is married to the queen."

"Married!"

"If he is not her husband, he is most assuredly her favoured lover."

"What! Resist a Buckingham, and yield to a Mazarin!"

"A true woman," replied d'Artagnan, philosophically.

"Yes, a woman—but a queen?"

"Ah, my God! but, in that respect, queens are even doubly women."

"And is M. de Beaufort still in prison?"

"Yes; and why do you inquire?" said d'Artagnan.

"Because, as he wished me well, he might have extricated me from this misery."

"You are probably nearer freedom than he is: therefore it is you that must extricate him."

"But then, the war," said Rochefort.

"We are going to have it."

"With the Spaniard?"

"No, with Paris," replied d'Artagnan.

"What do you mean?"

"Do you hear those shots?"

"Yes; and what then?"

"Well, it is the citizens, who are throwing the balls about before the game begins."

"And do you think that anything could be done with these citizens?" inquired Rochefort.

"Why, yes, they promise well; and if they had a chief who would unite all these scattered groups—"

"It is unfortunate not to be free."

"Ah, now, do not despond. If Mazarin has sent for you, he must want you for something; and if he really wants you, well,

then, I congratulate you. No one has wanted me for many a year; and you see my present position."

"Make your complaint, then; that's my advice."

"Listen, then, Rochefort—a bargain."

"What is it?"

"You know that we are good friends?"

"Yes, by Jove! I carry the marks of our friendship—three sword wounds!"

"Well, then, should you get into favour, remember me."

"By the faith of Rochefort! But on condition that you do the same for me in return."

"Agreed, and there is my hand. Therefore, the first opportunity you have of speaking for me—"

"I will speak. And you?"

"I will do the same."

'And, by the way, your friends—must I speak for them also?"

"What friends?"

"Athos, Porthos, and Aramis. Have you, then, forgotten them?"

"Almost."

"What is become of them?"

"I have not the slightest idea."

"Indeed!"

"Ah, yes! You know that we separated. They live; and that is all I can say. From time to time, I hear of them indirectly; but in what part of the world they are, the plague take me if I know; and, upon my honour, Rochefort, you are now my only friend."

"And the illustrious—what did you call the lad whom I made a sergeant in the regiment of Piedmont?"

"Planchet?"

"Yes, that is it—and what has become of the illustrious Planchet?"

"Why, he married a pastry-cook's shop in the rue des Lombards. He is a lad who always loved sweets; so that he is now a citizen of Paris, and, in all probability, he is now one of the rioters. You will see that the rascal will be a sheriff, before I am a captain."

"Come, my dear d'Artagnan, a little courage. It is when one is at the lowest part of the wheel that it turns, and raises you up. From this very evening, perhaps, your lot will change."

"Amen!" said d'Artagnan, stopping the carriage.

"What are you doing?" demanded Rochefort.

"We have reached our destination, and I do not wish to be seen getting out of the carriage—we do not know each other."

"You are right. Adieu!"

"To our next happy meeting! Remember your promise."

And, re-mounting his horse, d'Artagnan resumed his place at the head of the escort, which, a few minutes after, entered the court of the Palais Royal.

D'Artagnan conducted his prisoner by the grand staircase, through the antechamber and corridor. Having reached the door of Mazarin's cabinet, he was about to announce himself, when Rochefort put his hand upon his shoulder.

"D'Artagnan," said he, smiling, "shall I confess something, of which I was thinking during the whole of our route? When I saw the crowds through whom we passed, and who were looking at you and your four men, with flaming eyes "

"Well, what was your thought?" said d'Artagnan.

"It was that I had only to cry for help, to have you and your four men torn to pieces, and then I should have been at liberty."

"And why did you not do it?" said d'Artagnan.

"Come, now!" said Rochefort, "sworn friendship! Ah! if it had been any other than you, I do not say——"

D'Artagnan held down his head. "Is it that Rochefort is become better than I am?" said he to himself. And he caused himself to be announced to the minister.

"Show in M. de Rochefort," said the impatient voice of Mazarin, as soon as he had heard the two names mentioned; "and request M. d'Artagnan to wait. I have not yet done with him."

These words much delighted d'Artagnan. As he had said, it was a long time since any one had wanted him, and this perseverance of Mazarin was a good omen.

As for Rochefort, it had no other effect on him, than that of putting him completely on his guard. He entered the cabinet, and found Mazarin seated at a table, in his ordinary dress; that is to say, as his eminence. It was much the same as the dress of the abbés of the time, except that he wore a mantle, and stockings of a violet colour.

The door was closed. Rochefort looked at Mazarin out of the corner of his eye, and caught a glance from the minister, which crossed his own.

The minister was just the same—well combed, well curled, and well perfumed; and, thanks to his foppery, did not appear near his real age. With Rochefort, himself, it was quite another thing: the five years he had passed in prison had greatly changed the appearance of this worthy friend of Richelieu. His black hair had become perfectly white; and the bronzed and hardy colour of his complexion had given place to a paleness which looked like that of exhaustion. On seeing him, Mazarin shook his head imperceptibly, with an air which seemed to say—there is a man who does not appear to be good for much.

After a pause, which was, in reality, sufficiently long, but which appeared an age to Rochefort, Mazarin took an open letter from a bundle of papers, and showing it to him, said—"

"I have found a letter from you, M. de Rochefort, demanding your liberty. It would therefore appear that you are in prison?"

Rochefort started at this question.

"Why," said he, "it seems to me that your eminence must know that better than any one else."

"I? Not at all. There are crowds of prisoners in the Bastile, who have been there since the times of M. de Richelieu, and of whom I do not even know the names."

"That may be, your eminence; but as to me it is quite another thing. You must know of mine, since it was by your own order that I was transported from the Chatelet to the Bastile."

"Do you think so?"

"I am certain of it."

"Ah! now, indeed, I think I remember it. Did you not refuse to go to Brussels for the queen?"

"Ah!" exclaimed Rochefort, "so there is the true cause, after all. Fool that I am! I have been seeking for it these five years, and could not discover it."

"But I do not say that that was the cause of your arrest. Let us understand each other properly. I ask you the question—that is all—did you not refuse to go to Brussels on the queen's service, although you had before gone there for the cardinal?"

"It was precisely because I had gone for the cardinal, that I could not go there for the queen. I had been to Brussels under very terrible circumstances. It was after Chalais's conspiracy, that I went to discover his correspondence with the archduke; and when I was recognised, I narrowly escaped being torn to pieces. How, then, could you expect me to return there? I should have ruined the queen, instead of serving her."

"Well, you may now understand, my dear M. de Rochefort, how the best intentions may be misinterpreted. The queen saw, in your denial, only a pure and simple refusal; and, besides, her majesty had had much cause for complaint against you, under the late cardinal."

Rochefort smiled contemptuously. "It was precisely because I had faithfully served Cardinal Richelieu against the queen, that, when he was dead, your eminence ought to have comprehended I would have served you faithfully against all the world."

"Me? M. de Rochefort!" said Mazarin; "me! I am not like M. de Richelieu, who looked into everything. I am a plain minister, who do not stand in need of followers or servants, being myself the servant of the queen. Now, her majesty is very susceptible: she must have heard of your refusal, and (knowing that you were a superior, and, consequently, a dangerous man, my dear M. de Rochefort,) she must have ordered me to make sure of you. That is the way in which you got into the Bastile."

"Well, then, your excellence," said Rochefort, "it appears to me, that, if I got into the Bastile through mistake—"

"Yes, yes," replied Mazarin; "certainly; all that can be

managed. You are the man to comprehend certain affairs, and, these affairs being once understood, to push them forward."

"That was the opinion of Cardinal Richelieu; and my admiration for that great man is increased, when I hear you saying that it is yours also."

"It is true," replied Mazarin, "the cardinal was a great politician: in that consisted his vast superiority over myself, who am a plain unsophisticated being. That is what injures me. I have a frankness that is quite French."

Rochefort bit his lips to prevent his laughter.

"I come, therefore, to my object. I want some good friends, some faithful servants. When I say that I want, I mean that the queen wants them. I do nothing except by the queen's command—do you understand? It is not like Cardinal Richelieu, who did everything according to his own will and pleasure: therefore, I shall never be a great man, like him; but, instead of it, I am a good man, M. de Rochefort; and I hope that I shall convince you of it."

Rochefort knew that silky voice, with which, from time to time, a species of hissing, like that of a viper, was mingled.

"I am quite ready to believe you," said he; "though, for my part, I have had but few proofs of that goodness of which your eminence has spoken. Do not forget, your excellence," continued Rochefort, seeing the emotion which the minister endeavoured to suppress, "do not forget that I have been five years in the Bastile, and that nothing distorts the ideas so much as looking at things through the bars of a prison."

"Ah, M. de Rochefort, I have already told you that I had nothing to do with your imprisonment. The queen—the anger of a woman and a princess—what would you have! But it passes as it comes, and afterwards one thinks no more about it."

"I can conceive, your eminence, that she thinks no more about it—she, who has passed these five years in the midst of entertainments and courtiers; but I, who have passed them in the Bastile—"

"Oh, my God! my dear M. de Rochefort, do you imagine that the Palais Royal is such a very gay abode? No, indeed; we have

had great disturbance here, I assure you. But let us not talk any more about that. I play with all my cards on the table, as I always do. Are you one of us, M. de Rochefort?"

"Your eminence ought to comprehend, that I ask for nothing better. But I know nothing of what is going on. In the Bastile, we talk politics only with soldiers and gaolers, and your excellence has no idea how little those kind of gentry know of what is passing. I agree with M. de Bassompierre — he is one of the seventeen noblemen—"

"He is dead, sir, and it is a great loss. He was devoted to the queen, and such men are rare."

"By Jove! and I can well believe it," said Rochefort. "And when you do find them, you send them to the Bastile."

"But, after all, what proves devotion?" inquired Mazarin.

"Action," said Rochefort.

"Ah, yes, action," replied the minister, reflecting. But where are men of action to be found?"

Rochefort shook his head. "There are plenty of them, your excellence; but you do not search properly for them."

"I do not search properly? What do you mean, my dear M. de, Rochefort? Tell me—you must have learnt much during your intimacy with the late cardinal. Ah! he was a great man!"

"Will your excellence be angry if I give you a moral?"

"I? not at all. You know very well that you may say anything. I endeavour to make myself loved, and not feared."

"Well, then, there is a proverb, written on the wall of my dungeon with a "nail."

"And what is this proverb?" asked the cardinal.

"It is, your excellence—*like master*——"

"I know it:—*like valet*——"

"No;—like *servant*, or *follower*. It is a slight change, which the men of devotion, of whom I was just now speaking, introduced for their own particular satisfaction,"

"Well; and what does this proverb mean?"

"It means—that Richelieu found faithful servants by dozens."

"He!—the aim and object of every dagger! He—who passed

his whole life in warding off the blows which were struck at him!"

"But, after all, he did ward them off; and yet they were roughly given. It was because, if he had real enemies, he had also real friends."

"And that is all I require."

"I knew people," continued Rochefort, who thought that now was the time to keep his promise to d'Artagnan—"I knew some people, who, by their skill, have a hundred times evaded all the cardinal's penetration, and by their courage conquered his guards and spies—people who, without money, or support, or credit, preserved the crown on a royal head, and made the cardinal sue for pardon."

"But these people," said the cardinal, delighted at seeing Rochefort coming to the very point to which he wished to lead him—these people, of whom you speak, were not devoted to the cardinal, since they opposed him?"

"No, or they would have been better recompensed; but they had the misfortune to be devoted to that same queen, for whom you were just now requiring followers."

"But how can you know these things?"

"I know them, because at that time, these people were my enemies—because they contended against me—because I did them all the harm I could, and they requited me as far as they could—because one of them, with whom I was more especially engaged, gave me a sword wound about seven years ago: it was the third that I had received from his hand—the settlement of an old account."

"Ah!" said Mazarin, with wonderful good-nature: "if I only knew of such men as those!"

"Well, your excellence, you have had one at your door these six years, and all that time have considered him good for nothing."

"And who is he, then?"

"M. d'Artagnan."

"That Gascon!" exclaimed Mazarin, with well-feigned astonishment.

"That Gascon saved a queen, and made Richelieu confess, that, as to skill and political address, he was but a novice to him."

"Indeed!"

"It is precisely as I have the honour to inform your eminence."

"Tell me something about it, my dear M. de Rochefort?"

"That is a mighty difficult thing," said that gentleman, smiling.

"He will tell it me himself then?"

"I doubt it, your excellence."

"And why so?"

"Because the secret is not his own—because, as I have told you, it is the secret of a great queen."

"And was he alone in accomplishing such a vast enterprise?"

"No, your excellence; he had three friends, three gallant men, who seconded him—such men as you sought for just now."

"And these four men were united, do you say?"

"As if the four had made but one man—as if these four hearts had beat in one bosom. Therefore what did they not do—these four!"

"My dear M. de Rochefort, you really excite my curiosity so much, that I cannot express it to you. Could you not tell me this history?"

"No; but I can recount a tale to you—a real fairy tale, your excellence."

"Oh, do tell it me, M. de Rochefort! I am very fond of tales."

"You wish for it, then, your excellence?" said Rochefort, endeavouring to detect some motive in the expression of that acute and crafty countenance.

"Yes."

"Well, then, listen.—There was once a queen—a very powerful queen—the queen of one of the mightiest kingdoms in the world—against whom a great minister had conceived a violent hatred, because he had before been too favourably inclined towards her. Do not endeavour to find out who—your excellence could never guess. All this happened a long time before you came into the country where this queen reigned. Now, there came an ambassador

to this court, so brave, so rich, and so elegant, that all the women became mad; and the queen herself, no doubt as a memorial of the manner in which he had managed the affairs of state, had the imprudence to give him an ornament, so remarkable, that it could not be replaced. As this ornament was a present from the king, the minister persuaded him to insist upon the queen's wearing it at an approaching ball. It is unnecessary to tell your excellence that the minister knew for certain that this ornament had accompanied the ambassador, which ambassador was far distant, on the other side of the sea. The great queen was lost—ruined—like the lowest of her subjects; for she would have inevitably fallen from the very pinnacle of her grandeur."

"Really!" said Mazarin.

"Well, then, your excellence, four men determined to save her. These four men were not princes, nor dukes, nor men of power; they were not even men of wealth: they were four soldiers, of most intrepid courage, strong arms, and great skill at the sword.—They departed. The minister knew of their departure, and had posted men on their road, to prevent the accomplishment of their object. Three of the four were disabled by numerous assailants; and one alone reached the harbour, having killed or wounded those who attempted to stop him, passed the sea, and brought back the ornament to the great queen, who was able to hang it over her shoulder on the day appointed; and thus nearly overthrew the minister. What do you think of that stroke, your excellence?"

"It was splendid!" said Mazarin, meditating.

"And I know ten, quite equal to it."

Mazarin did not speak, but continued thinking.

"Have you anything more to ask me, your excellence?" said Rochefort.

"Yes. And you say that M. d'Artagnan was one of these four-men?"

"Yes; he conducted the enterprize."

"And who were the others?"

"Your excellence must permit me to leave the task of giving their names to M. d'Artagnan himself. They were his friends, not

mine. He alone can have any influence over them; and I do not even know them by their real names."

"You distrust me, M. de Rochefort. Well, I will be frank with you to the end. I have need of you—of him—in short, of all!"

"Begin with me, your excellence, since you sent for me, and I am here: then you can pass on to the others. You cannot be surprised at my curiosity: when a man has been five years in prison, he is naturally anxious to know where he is going to be sent."

"You, my dear M. de Rochefort, will have a confidential appointment. You will go to Vincennes, where M. de Beaufort is a prisoner, and you will keep your eye always upon him. Well, now! what is the matter with you?"

"Why the matter is, that you have made me a proposition with which it is utterly impossible that I can comply," said Rochefort, shaking his head with a disappointed air.

"How! An impossibility? And why so?"

"Because M. de Beaufort is one of my friends; or, rather, I am one of his. Has your excellence forgotten that it was M. de Beaufort who answered for me to the queen."

"M. de Beaufort has since become the enemy of the state."

"That may possibly be the case, your excellence; but, as I am neither king, nor queen, nor minister, he is not my enemy, and I cannot accept what you offer me."

"And that is what you term your devotion! I congratulate you upon it. Your devotion does not carry you too far, M. de Rochefort."

"And, besides, your excellence will understand, that to leave the Bastile, to go to Vincennes, is only changing one's prison."

"Say at once that you are of M. de Beaufort's party, and you will then be more candid."

"Your excellence, I have been so long cooped up, that I belong only to one party, and that is the party of the free and open air of heaven. Employ me in any other way—send me on a mission—occupy me actively; but, if possible, let it be in the free air."

"My dear M. de Rochefort," said Mazarin, with his bantering air, "your zeal carries you too far. Because your heart is good,

you imagine yourself still a young man; but your strength would fail you. Believe me, what you now want is repose. Halloo, there, some one!"

"You therefore determine nothing concerning me, your excellence?"

"On the contrary, I have determined."

Bernouin entered.

"Call an officer," said Mazarin, "and remain in the room," he added, in a low voice.

An officer entered. Mazarin wrote a few words, which he gave to the man, and then bowed. "Adieu, M. de Rochefort," said he.

Rochefort bowed respectfully. "I perceive, your excellence," said he, "that I am going back to the Bastile."

"You have a quick intelligence," said his eminence.

"I return there, your excellence; but I again repeat, that you are wrong in not employing me."

"You! the friend of my enemies."

"What would you have? You should have made me the enemy of your enemies."

"And do you think that there is no one but yourself, M. de Rochefort? Believe me, I can find plenty, of much greater value."

"I wish you may, your excellence."

"Very well. Go, go! But, by the by, it is quite useless to write any more letters, M. de Rochefort. They will be entirely wasted."

"I have drawn the chestnuts from the fire," muttered Rochefort, as he left the room; "and if d'Artagnan is not satisfied with the eulogium I have just passed upon him, he is mighty difficult. But where the plague are they taking me?"

In fact, they led him back by the little staircase, instead of passing through the antechamber, where d'Artagnan was waiting. In the court he found his carriage, and the four guards of his escort; but he looked in vain for his friend.

"Ah, ah!" said Rochefort to himself: "this makes an awful change in affairs: and if there should be still the same number of people in the streets——Well, we will endeavour to prove to Maza-

rin, that we are still, thank God, worth something better than to guard a prisoner."

And he jumped into the carriage as lightly as if he had been only twenty-five years old.

CHAPTER IV.

ANNE OF AUSTRIA AT FORTY-SIX YEARS OF AGE.

Mazarin, when alone with Bernouin, remained pensive for a moment or two. He knew a good deal, and yet he did not know quite enough. He was a regular chent at play: that is a fact which Brienne has preserved for us. He called it taking a fair advantage. He therefore resolved not to form any engagement with Ad'rtagnan until he knew all his adversary's cards.

"Has your excellency any commands?" inquired Bernouin.

"Yes," replied Mazarin: "show me a light: I am going to the queen."

Bernouin took a candle, and led the way.

There was a secret passage, which led from Mazarin's apartments to those of the queen; and it was by this passage that Mazarin went, at all hours, to Anne of Austria.*

On reaching the bed-chamber, into which this passage opened, Bernouin met Madame Beauvais. Madame Beauvais and Bernouin were the two confidants of these superannuated amours; and Madame Beauvais undertook to announce the cardinal to Anne of Austria, who was in her oratory, with the young king, Louis XIV.

Anne of Austria, seated in a large easy-chair, with her elbow resting on a table, and her head supported by her hand, was looking at the royal child, who, stretched upon the carpet, was turning over a large book of battles. Anne of Austria was a queen who was tired of state ceremony; and she often remained for hours shut

* This secret passage may still be seen at the Palais Royal.

up in her chamber or her oratory, without either reading or praying.

As for the book with which the king was amusing himself, it was a Quintus Curtius, enriched with engravings representing the great actions of Alexander.

Madame Beauvais appeared at the door of the oratory, and announced the Cardinal Mazarin.

The child raised himself on one knee, frowning; and looking at his mother, he said, "Why does he come in this manner, without demanding an audience?"

The queen blushed slightly. "It is necessary" she replied, "in the peculiar times in which we live, that the prime minister should have the privilege of coming at any hour to give an account of what is passing to the queen, without exciting the curiosity of the whole court."

"But I do not think that M. de Richelieu came in this manner," answered the incorrigible child.

"And what do you remember about M. de Richelieu? You can know nothing about him: you were far too young."

"I do not remember it myself; but I have inquired, and have been told so."

"And who has told you this?" replied Anne of Austria, with an ill-disguised emotion of anger.

"I know that I must never name the persons who answer my questions," replied the child, "or I shall obtain no more information."

At that moment Mazarin made his appearance. The king rose, took his book, shut it, and laid it on the table, near which he remained standing, that he might oblige Mazarin to stand also.

This scene did not escape the intelligent eye of Mazarin, and he endeavoured to conjecture what had preceded it. He bowed respectfully to the queen, and made a profound reverence to the king, who returned it haughtily enough. But a glance from his mother reproached him for thus indulging the hatred which Louis XIV. had, from his earliest youth, cherished towards the cardinal; and

he received the minister's compliments with a forced smile on his lips.

Anne of Austria tried to divine, from the expression of the cardinal's features, the cause of this unexpected visit, for he seldom came until all were in bed.

The minister made an almost imperceptible sign with his head. Then the queen, addressing Madame Beauvais, said—"It is time for the king to go to bed. Call Laporte."

The queen had two or three times before told the young king to go to bed, and the child had always, in a caressing manner, insisted on remaining up a little longer; but this time he made no observation: he only bit his lips, and grew pale. A moment after Laporte entered; and the child went straight up to him, without kissing his mother.

"Why, Louis!" said Anne, "why do you not kiss me?"

"I thought you were angry with me, madame, as you drive me away."

"I do not drive you away. But you know you have just had the small-pox, and, as you are not yet quite recovered, I feared that sitting up late would fatigue you."

"You had not the same fear yesterday, when you made me go to the palace, to pass those abominable edicts, which have caused the people to murmur so much."

"Sire," said Laporte, in order to create a diversion, "to whom do you wish that I should give the candle?"

"To whomsoever you please, Laporte," replied the boy, "provided," he added, in a loud voice, "that it be not to M. Mancini."

Mancini was a nephew of the cardinal's, whom Mazarin had placed near the king as a page, and against whom Louis directed some of that hatred which he evinced for the cardinal.

And the king left the room, without either kissing his mother, or saluting the cardinal.

"Well done!" said Mazarin: "I am delighted to perceive that his majesty is brought up with a horror of dissimulation."

"And how so?" said the queen, in a timid voice.

"I think that the king's mode of leaving the room requires no

comment. Besides, his majesty does not give himself the trouble to conceal his affection for me; which, however, will not lessen my devotion to his service, as well as to that of your majesty."

"I beg pardon for him, cardinal," said the queen: "the boy is not yet able to appreciate his obligations to you."

The cardinal smiled.

"But," continued the queen, "you are doubtless come for some important object. What is it?"

Mazarin seated, or rather threw himself into a chair, and said, in a melancholy tone—

"We shall, in all probability, be soon compelled to separate, unless you carry your devotion to me so far as to follow me to Italy."

"And why so?" demanded the queen.

"Because, as the opera of *Thisbe* says," replied Mazarin, "the whole world conspires to divide our hearts."

"You are jesting, sir," said the queen, endeavouring to assume somewhat of her former dignity.

"Alas, no, madame!" replied Mazarin; "I am not jesting. I am, believe me, much more inclined to weep; and there is good reason for it; for mark well what I say—the whole world conspires to divide our hearts. Now, as you constitute a portion of this whole world, I would say that you also abandon me."

"Cardinal?"

"Ah, my God! did I not see you smiling most sweetly at the Duke of Orleans; or, rather, at what he said?"

"And what did he say?"

"He said, madame—it is your Mazarin who is the stumbling-block: let him depart, and all will be well!"

"And what would you have had me do?"

"Oh, madame, you are the queen, I believe!"

"Charming royalty! that is at the mercy of the first scribbler on dirty paper in the Palais Royal, or the first poor gentleman of the realm!"

"And yet you are powerful enough to remove those who displease you."

"That is to say, who displease you," replied the queen.

"Me?"

Yes, certainly. Who sent away Madame de Chevreuse, who had also been persecuted for ten years under the late reign?"

"An intriguing woman, who wished to carry on, against me, the cabals begun against M. de Richelieu."

"Who banished Madame de Hautefort, that friend so faithful, that she refused the king's favour, in order that she might remain in mine."

"A prude—who every evening told you, whilst she undressed you, that you perilled your soul by loving a priest; as if a man must necessarily be a priest because he is a cardinal."

"Who caused M. de Beaufort to be arrested?"

"A turbulent fellow, who actually thought of assassinating me,"

"You plainly see, cardinal, that your enemies are mine also."

"That is not sufficient, madame: it is also necessary that your friends should be mine."

"My friends, sir!" (The queen shook her head.) "Alas! I have no longer any."

"How is it that you have none in prosperity, when you had so many in adversity?"

"Because, in my prosperity, I forgot those friends—because I have acted like the Queen Marie de Medicis, who, on her return from her first exile, despised all those who had suffered for her, and who, when banished a second time, died at Cologne, abandoned by all the world, nay even by her own son, because all the world in turn despised her."

"Well then, let us see," said Mazarin, "if there be not yet time to repair this evil? Think over some of your friends—of your most ancient friends."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"Nothing, but what I say. Think them over."

"Alas! in vain should I look around me. I have no longer influence over any one. Monsieur is, as usual, managed by his favourite. Yesterday it was Choisy; to-day, it is La Riviere; to-morrow, it will be some one else. The prince is led by Madame

de Longueville, who is herself led by the Prince de Marsillac, her lover. M. de Conti is led by the coadjutor, who is led by Madame de Guémenée."

"And therefore it is, madame, that I do not wish you to look amongst your friends of the present time, but amongst those of times that are past."

"Amongst my friends of times gone by?" said the queen.

"Yes, amongst your friends of by-gone days—amongst those who assisted you in struggling against the Duc de Richelieu, and in conquering him too."

"What is he aiming at?" murmured the queen, looking anxiously at the cardinal.

"Yes," he continued, "under certain circumstances, with that powerful and acute mind which characterizes your majesty, you were able, thanks to the aid of your friends, to repulse the attacks of that adversary."

"I!" said the queen—"I have suffered—that is all!"

"Yes," replied Mazarin, "as women suffer — by revenging themselves! However, let us come to facts. Do you know M. de Rochefort?"

"M. de Rochefort was not one of my friends," said the queen: "on the contrary, he was my bitterest enemy, and one of the most devoted followers of the cardinal. I thought you knew that."

"I know it so well," said Mazarin, "that we put him into the Bastile."

"And has he left it?" demanded the queen.

"No: you may be assured that he is still there. But I only mention him to come to another. Do you know M. d'Artagnan?" continued Mazarin, looking the queen full in the face.

Anne of Austria received the blow directly in the heart.

"Has the Gascon been indiscreet!" she murmured. Then she said aloud:—"D'Artagnan? Wait, now—yes, certainly, that name is familiar to me. D'Artagnan!—a musketeer, who loved one of my women—a poor little creature, who was poisoned in my service."

"Is that all?" said Mazarin.

The queen looked at the cardinal with astonishment. "It appears

to me, sir, as if you were subjecting me to a regular interrogatory!"

"To which, of course," said Mazarin, with his eternal smile, and his everlasting smooth voice, "you will only answer according to your capricious fancy."

"Explain your wishes openly and clearly, sir, and I will answer them in the same manner," said the queen, with some impatience.

"Well, then, madame," continued Mazarin, bowing, "I desire that you will share your friends with me, as I share my industry, and the talents with which Heaven has gifted me, with you. The circumstances of the times are serious, and all our energy will be required."

"Again!" said the queen. "I hoped that we had finished with M. de Beaufort."

"Yes, you looked only at the torrent, which would carry everything before it, and paid no attention to the still-water; and yet there is a proverb in France about the still-water."

"Proceed," said the queen.

"Well, then, continued Mazarin, I am daily affronted by your princes and titled servants—all mere automatons, who see not that I hold the thread of their fate, and who, under my calm and patient gravity, do not descry the smile of an irritated man, who has sworn to himself one day to have them in his power. We arrested M. de Beaufort, it is true; but he is the least dangerous of the party. There is still M. le Prince."

"What! the conqueror of Rocroi? Do you think of him?"

"Yes, madame, and very often. But *patienza*, as we Italians say. Then, after M. de Condé, there is the Duke of Orleans."

"What are you saying? The first prince of the blood—the king's uncle!"

"Not the first prince of the blood—not the king's uncle—but the dastardly conspirator, who, under the late reign—pushed forward by his fantastic and capricious disposition, corroded by a miserable restlessness, devoured by a wretched ambition, jealous of every one who surpassed him in loyalty and courage, irritated at being utterly valueless—became, thanks to his nothingness, the echo of every evil

rumour, the soul of every cabal, and pretended to lead all those brave men, who had the folly to trust the word of a prince of the blood, and who found to their cost that he disowned and abandoned them when they had mounted the scaffold! Not the first prince of the blood—not the king's uncle, I repeat—but the murderer of Chalais, of Montmorency, and of Cinq-Mars; who is now endeavouring to play the same game, and fancies that he shall win it, because he has changed his adversary; and, because, instead of being opposed to a man who threatens, he has one who laughs at him. But he deceives himself. It never can be for my interest to leave near the queen that brand of discord, by which the late cardinal irritated the king's bile for twenty years."

The queen blushed, and concealed her face in her hands.

"I do not wish to lower your majesty," continued Mazarin, in a tone of singular firmness, but at the same time much more calmly than before. "I wish the queen to be respected, and her minister also—since, in the eyes of the world, I am no more than her minister. Your majesty knows that I am not, as many say, a mere Italian adventurer; and the world must know it, as well as your majesty."

"Well, then, what must I do?" said Anne of Austria, subdued by his imperious manner.

"You must endeavour to remember the names of those faithful and devoted servants, who, in spite of Richelieu, and leaving traces of their blood on all their route, passed the sea to bring back to your majesty a certain ornament, which you had given to the Duke of Buckingham."

Anne arose, majestic and irritated, as if she had been raised by a steel spring; and regarded the cardinal with that haughty and dignified air which made her so powerful in her youth.

"You insult me, sir!" said she.

"I wish, in fine," continued Mazarin, terminating the thought which she had interrupted—"I wish that you should now do, for your husband, what you formerly did for your lover."

"Still this calumny!" exclaimed the queen. "I had thought that it was forgotten, for you have not hitherto alluded to it. But at length you bring it forward. So much the better! for now we

will discuss the matter, and then it shall be done with for ever. Do you understand?"

"But, madame," said Mazarin, astonished by this resumption of energy, "I do not ask you to tell me all."

"But I, sir, wish to tell you all," replied Anne of Austria. "Listen, then. I tell you that there were, in fact, at that time, four devoted hearts, four loyal souls, four trusty swords, which preserved more than my life, for they preserved my honour!"

"Ah, you confess it!" said the cardinal.

"And is it the guilty only whose honour is often perilled, sir?" replied Anne of Austria. "And cannot any woman be disgraced, solely by appearances? Yes, appearances were against me, and I should have been disgraced; and yet I swear that I was not guilty —I swear it!"

The queen sought for something sacred, by which she might swear, and drawing from a closet, concealed in the tapestry, a small rosewood casket, inlaid with silver, and placing it on the altar—"I swear it!" she continued, "on these sacred relics, that I was loved by the Duke of Buckingham, but he was never my favoured lover!"

"And what are these relics, on which you make this oath, madame?" said Mazarin, smiling. "For I tell you, madame, in my quality of a Roman, that I am incredulous."

The queen detached a small golden key from her neck, and gave it to the cardinal, saying, "Open it, sir, and see them yourself."

Mazarin, in great astonishment, took the key and opened the casket, in which he found a knife, eaten up with rust, and two letters, one of which was stained with blood.

"And what does all this mean?" inquired Mazarin.

"What does it mean, sir?" replied Anne of Austria, with her regal gesture, and pointing to the casket with an arm, still of unrivalled beauty, in spite of her years: "I will tell you! These two letters are the only ones that I ever wrote to the Duke of Buckingham; and that is the knife with which Felton stabbed him. Read the letters, sir, and you will see if I have spoken the truth."

Notwithstanding the permission he had received, Mazarin, go-

verned by a natural impulse, instead of reading the letters, took up the knife which the dying Buckingham had drawn from his wound, and which he had sent by Laporte to the queen. The blade was much corroded, for the blood had turned into rust. Then, after a moment's examination, during which the queen had become as pale as the cloth which covered the altar on which she leant, he replaced it in the casket, with an involuntary shudder.

"It is well, madame," said he: "I trust to your oath."

"No, no; read!" said the queen with a frown: "read! I wish —I command you! so that, as I have resolved, everything may be now finished, and we may never again recur to the subject. Do you think," she said, with a fearful smile, "that I should be disposed to re-open this casket at every one of your future accusations?"

Mazarin, vanquished by this energy, obeyed almost mechanically, and read both the letters. One was that in which the queen requested Buckingham to return the diamond tags, which d'Artagnan had carried, and which had reached him in time; the other was that which Laporte had carried to Buckingham, warning him of his assassination, and which had arrived too late.

"It is very well, madame," said Mazarin: "nothing can be said against it."

"Yes, sir," said the queen, closing the casket, and placing her hand upon it: "yes, something may be said; and it is, that I have always been very ungrateful to those who saved me, and who did all they could to save him—it is, that I gave nothing to that brave d'Artagnan, of whom you spoke just now, but my hand to kiss, and this diamond."

The queen extended her beautiful hand to the cardinal, and showed him a spendid stone, which glittered on her finger.

"He sold it, most likely," continued her majesty, "when under temporary embarrassment—he sold it to save me a second time; for it was to send a messenger to the duke, to warn him against assassination."

"Then d'Artagnan knew it?" said the cardinal.

"He knew everything—but how, it is impossible to say. He

sold this ring to M. des Essarts, on whose finger I saw it, and from whom I purchased it. But this diamond belongs to him. Give it him from me; and, since you have the good fortune to have such a man near you, endeavour to make good use of him."

"Thank you, madame. I will avail myself of your advice."

"And now," said the queen, as if exhausted by emotion, "have you any other question to ask me?"

"Nothing, madame," said the cardinal, in his most caressing voice, "except to pardon me for my unjust suspicions. But I love you so much, that it is not wonderful that I am jealous even of the past."

An indescribable smile passed over the queen's lips. "Well then, sir," said she, "if you have nothing more to ask me, leave me. You must feel, that, after such a scene, I have need of solitude."

Mazarin bowed. "I leave you, madame; but may I return?"

"Yes, to-morrow. I shall not have had too long a time to recover myself."

The cardinal took her hand, gallantly kissed it, and left the room.

Scarcely was he gone, when the queen went into her son's chamber, and asked Laporte if he was in bed. Laporte pointed to the sleeping child. Anne of Austria mounted the steps of the bed, and softly imprinted a kiss on her son's forehead. Then she retired, as silently as she had entered, merely saying to the valet de chambre, "Endeavour to make the king look more favourably upon M. le Cardinal, my dear Laporte: for we are both under the greatest obligations to him."

CHAPTER V.

THE GASCON AND THE ITALIAN.

In the meantime, the cardinal had returned to his cabinet, at the door of which he found Bernouin, of whom he inquired whether any thing fresh had happened, and whether he had heard any news from without. On his answering in the negative, he dismissed him.

Being now alone, he opened the door of the corridor, and then of the antechamber. D'Artagnan, much fatigued, was asleep on a bench.

"M. d'Artagnan!" said he, in a soft voice.

D'Artagnan did not move.

"M. d'Artagnan!" he repeated, in a louder tone.

D'Artagnan remained sleeping.

The cardinal went up to him, and touched his shoulder.

This time he started, awoke, and in an instant was standing stiff and upright, as if on parade. "Here I am," said he; "who calls me?"

"I do," said Mazarin, with his sweetest smile.

"I beg your eminence's pardon," said d'Artagnan, "but I was so fatigued—"

"Do not beg my pardon, sir," replied Mazarin, "for you fatigued yourself in my service."

D'Artagnan wondered at the gracious answer of the minister. "Heyday!" said he, between his teeth, "is the proverb true which says, luck comes when one is sleeping?"

"Follow me, sir," said Mazarin.

"Come, come," thought d'Artagnan, to himself, "Rochefort has kept his word; but where the deuce is he gone to?"

He looked into every corner of the room, but Rochefort was no longer there.

"M. d'Artagnan," said Mazarin, settling himself comfortably in his easy-chair, "you have always appeared to me to be a brave and gallant man."

"Possibly so," thought d'Artagnan; "but he has taken plenty of time in letting me know his opinion!" But this did not prevent his bowing to the ground, in reply to Mazarin's compliment.

"Well," continued Mazarin, "the time is arrived for me to profit by your talents and valour."

A gleam of joy flashed from the officer's eyes, but it as suddenly vanished; for he knew not what Mazarin was driving at.

"Your excellence has only to command," said he: "I am ready to obey.

"M. d'Artagnan," continued Mazarin, "you performed certain exploits under the late reign——"

"Your excellence is too good to remember them. It is true, I served with some degree of success."

"I do not refer to your warlike exploits," said Mazarin; "for although they made some noise in the world, they were surpassed by the others."

D'Artagnan assumed an appearance of astonishment. "I listen, that your excellence may inform me to what exploits you refer."

"I refer to that adventure—ha! you know very well what I mean."

"Alas, no, your excellence!" replied d'Artagnan, now really astonished.

"You are discreet. Well, so much the better. I refer to that adventure of the queen—those diamond tags—that journey which you took, with your three friends."

"Aha!" thought the Gascon, "it is a regular trap: let us keep on our guard."

And he fortified his features with an assumption of the most complete stolidity, such as Mondori or Bellerose, the two best comedians of the day, would have envied.

"Capital!" said Mazarin, laughing: "bravo! They might well tell me that you were exactly the man I wanted. Come, let us see what you would do for me?"

"Whatever your excellence may command me to do," replied d'Artagnan.

"Would you do for me, what you formerly did for the queen?"

"Decidedly," said d'Artagnan to himself, "he wants to make me speak. But let me first see what he is aiming at. Plague take him! he is not sharper than Richelieu."

"For the queen, your excellence? I do not understand you."

"You do not comprehend, then, that I have need of you and your three friends?"

"Of what friends, your excellence?"

"Your three old friends."

"Of my three friends of old times, your excellence?" replied

d'Artagnan. "I had not three friends—I had fifty. At twenty years old, a man calls every one his friend."

"Well, well, sir officer," said Mazarin, "discretion is a fine thing; but now you may repent having been too discreet."

"Your excellence, Pythagoras made his followers keep silence for five years, to teach them to hold their tongues."

"And you have kept it for twenty years, sir—that is, fifteen more than the Pythagorean philosophers—which appears to me quite sufficient. Speak now, therefore, for the queen herself releases you from your oath."

"The queen!" said d'Artagnan, with an astonishment which was now quite genuine.

"Yes, the queen; and to prove that I speak in her name, she told me to show you this diamond, which she says you know, and which she purchased of M. des Essarts."

And Mazarin held out his hand to the officer, who sighed on beholding the ring which the queen had given him on the night of the ball at the Hotel de Ville.

"It is true," said d'Artagnan. "I recognise that diamond, as having belonged to the queen."

"You see, therefore, that I speak to you in her name. Answer me, then, without any further prevarication. I have already told you, and I repeat it, your fortune depends upon it."

"Faith, your excellence, I have some need of good fortune. Your eminence has so long forgotten me!"

"Eight days will make up for all that. Come, then; you are here—but where are your friends?"

"I have not the least idea, your excellence."

"How! You have not the least idea?"

"No. We have been long separated; for all three have quitted the service."

"But where will you find them?"

"Oh, wherever they may be. That is my affair."

"Very well.—Your conditions?"

"Money, your excellence—as much as our enterprises may require. Faith, I remember too well how greatly we were impeded

by want of money; and without that diamond, which I was obliged to sell, we should have been completely arrested in our course."

"Money! and plenty of it!" said Mazarin: "how you are getting on, sir officer! Do you not know that there is no money in the king's coffers?"

"Then follow my example, your eminence—sell the crown diamonds. Believe me, you must not drive a close bargain. Great actions are but badly executed with small means."

"Well, well," said Mazarin, "we will give you satisfaction."

"Richelieu," thought d'Artagnan, "would at once have given me five hundred pistoles, as earnest money."

"You will, therefore, be mine," said the cardinal.

"Yes, if my friends agree to it."

"But should they refuse—may I still depend upon you?"

"I have never done anything well alone," answered d'Artagnan, shaking his head.

"Then go and find them."

"And what shall I say, to induce them to serve your eminence?"

"You know them better than I do; and according to their characters, you must promise them."

"But what am I to promise them?"

"That if they serve me as they did the queen, their reward shall be brilliant."

"And what are we to do?"

"Everything; since it appears that you know how to do every thing."

"Your excellence, when people have mutual confidence in each other, they give some more definite information than your eminence appears inclined to afford."

"When the time of action has arrived," said Mazarin "be assured that you shall have full information, without reserve."

"And, till that time——"

"Wait, and search for your friends."

"Your excellence, perhaps they may not be in Paris; indeed that is most probably the case. I must therefore take a journey. I am only a very poor lieutenant of musketeers, and travelling is expensive."

"My intention," said Mazarin, "is, that you should not travel with a great train. My projects require secresy, and would be injured by too large an equipage."

"And yet, your excellence, I cannot travel on my pay, more especially as it is now three months in arrear to me; and I cannot travel on my savings, seeing that, for the twenty-two years that I have been in the service, I have only laid up debts."

Mazarin remained a moment pensive. A vast internal struggle succeeded; and then, going to a chest, fastened with a triple lock, he drew from it a bag, which he weighed two or three times in his hand, before he gave it to d'Artagnan. "Take this, then," said he, heaving a sigh: "that is for your journey."

"If they are Spanish doubloons, or even crowns of gold," thought d'Artagnan, "we may yet manage pretty well together." He bowed to the cardinal, and buried the bag in his enormous pocket.

"Well, then, it is settled," said the cardinal: "you will commence your journey."

"Yes, your excellence."

"Write to me daily, to give me an account of your negotiations."

"I will not fail to do so, your eminence."

"Very well; but, *apropos*, the names of your friends?"

"The names of my friends?" said d'Artagnan, with a remnant of uneasiness.

"Yes. Whilst you are searching for them on your part, I may make some inquiries on mine; and perhaps I may gain some information."

"M. le Comte de la Fére, otherwise called Athos; M. Duvallon, otherwise called Porthos; and M. le Chevalier d'Herblay, now the Abbé d'Herblay, otherwise called Aramis."

The cardinal smiled. "Young men," said he, "who entered the musketeers under false names, that they might not compromise their family names:—long swords, but light purses—I understand that."

"If God should permit these long rapiers to pass into your eminence's service," said d'Artagnan, "I dare to express a hope, that it may be your eminence's purse which may become light, and

theirs heavy. For with these three men, and myself, your eminence may move all France, and even Europe, if such should be your pleasure."

"These Gascons," said Mazarin, "almost equal the Italians in bragging."

"At all events," rejoined d'Artagnan, with a smile which would not have disgraced the cardinal himself, "they are better hands at dunning."

And he left the room, having first demanded leave of absence, which Mazarin at once furnished him.

Scarcely was he beyond the precincts of the palace, when he went up to a lamp, and looked hastily into the bag. "Ecus of silver!" said he, contemptuously. "I suspected so! Ah, Mazarin, Mazarin! you have no confidence in me. So much the worse! It will only bring you ill-luck!"

In the meantime the cardinal was rubbing his hands. "A hundred pistoles," he murmured—"a hundred pistoles! For a hundred pistoles I have obtained a secret, for which Richelieu would have paid twenty-five thousand ecus—without reckoning this diamond," added he, amorously ogling the diamond, which he had kept, instead of giving it to d'Artagnan—"without reckoning this diamond, which is worth at least ten thousand livres."

And the cardinal went into his chamber, delighted with his evening's success, placed the ring in a casket filled with brilliants of every kind—for he had a taste for jewels—and called Bernouin to undress him, without allowing himself to be further disturbed by the noises which shook the windows at intervals, and the shots which resounded throughout Paris, although it was now past eleven o'clock at night.

In the meantime, d'Artagnan was proceeding towards the rue Triquetonne, where he lived, at the hotel de la Chevrette. Let us give some explanation of the reasons which had induced him to make choice of this abode.

CHAPTER VI.

D'ARTAGNAN AT FORTY YEARS OF AGE.

Alas! since the time when, in our romance of "The Three Musketeers," we left d'Artagnan at No. 12, in the rue des Fossoyeurs, many things had happened, and many years had elapsed.

D'Artagnan had not lost opportunities; for, unfortunately, they had never presented themselves to him. As long as he was surrounded by his friends, he had revelled in his youth and his imagination. His was one of those fine and ingenuous minds, which easily imbibe the qualities of others. Athos gave him his magnanimity, Porthos his nerve, Aramis his elegance; and if d'Artagnan had continued to live with these three men, he would have become a most superior character. As we have related in the latter part of our romance of "The Three Musketeers," Porthos quitted him first, to marry the solicitor's widow; Aramis the second, to become an abbé; and Athos last, to take possession of a small inheritance, not far from Blois. From that moment, d'Artagnan, who appeared to have mixed up his futurity with that of his three friends, found himself isolated and weak, and without courage to follow a career in which he foresaw that he could gain no reputation, unless each of his friends should (if we may so speak) communicate to him a portion of that electric fluid which he had received from heaven.

Therefore, although he had become a lieutenant of musketeers, d'Artagnan found himself still more isolated. He was not of sufficiently high birth, like Athos, to be admitted into the highest society; nor had he the vanity of Porthos, to make others believe that this was the case. He had not the elegance of Aramis so as to maintain that natural polish which he derived from himself. For some time, the sweet recollection of Madame Bonacieux had stamped a kind of poetry on the mind of the young lieutenant; but, like everything else in this perishable world, that recollection had been gradually effaced. The life of a garrison is fatal even to aristocratic organizations. Of the two antagonistic natures which composed

d'Artagnan's individuality, the material one had gradually predominated; and very gently, and almost imperceptibly to himself, d'Artagnan, (always in garrison, in the camp, or on horseback,) had become —I know not what it was called at that period, but what we now term—a regular trooper.

Not that d'Artagnan had lost his original acuteness. No; on the contrary, that acuteness was perhaps even augmented, or, at any rate, appeared doubly remarkable under an exterior somewhat more unpolished. But he had applied this acuteness to the small, and not the great, purposes of life—to his material comforts—to what soldiers deem comforts; that is to say, the possession of good bed, a good table, and a good hostess.

And for the last six years, d'Artagnan had found all these at the sign of the Chevrette, in the rue Triquetonne.

During the first period of his abode in that hotel, the hostess, a young and pretty Flemish woman, of about twenty-five years of age, had been much taken with him. After many disputes with an obstinate and perverse husband, whom d'Artagnan had been very near running through the body ten or a dozen times, that husband had disappeared one fine morning, evanishing for ever, after having furtively sold some casks of wine, and carried off all the plate and jewels. He was thought to be dead. His wife more especially, who flattered herself with the soft idea that she was a widow, stoutly maintained that he had departed this life. At last, after three years, intimacy, which d'Artagnan took good care not to break off, every year finding his situation and his hostess more agreeable—for the one did credit to the other—the hostess had the unconscionable presumption to wish to become a wife, and proposed to d'Artagnan to espouse her.

"Oh, fie, then!" replied d'Artagnan.—"Bigamy, my dear! Come, now, you cannot mean it!"

"But he is dead—I am quite sure of it."

"He was a most perverse rogue, and is just the fellow to return on purpose to hang us."

"Well, then, if he should return, you shall kill him—you are so brave and skilful."

"Plague take it, my dear! that is only another mode of getting hanged."

"Therefore you regret my offer?"

"Yes, most decidedly."

The beautiful hostess was in absolute despair. She would most willingly have made M. d'Artagnan her husband—such a handsome man, and such a fierce moustache!

About the fourth year of this intimacy, the expedition of Franche Comté took place, and d'Artagnan was ordered on it, and prepared to depart. Then came extreme sorrow, oceans of tears, and solemn promises of eternal fidelity. But it must be understood that all this was on the part of the lady. D'Artagnan was too great a man to make any promise: therefore he only promised to do all he could to increase his own reputation.

In this respect his courage is well known. He did not spare his own person; and, in charging at the head of his company, he received a ball in the chest, which extended him on the field of battle. He was seen to fall from his horse, and was not seen to rise again: therefore he was thought to be dead; and all those who hoped to gain a step by it, at once declared that it was so. What is desired is easily believed; and in the army—from the general of division, who desires the death of the commander-in-chief, even to the privates, who desire the death of the corporals—everybody wishes for the death of some one.

But d'Artagnan was not the sort of man to allow himself to be killed in this manner. After having remained, during the heat of the day, insensible on the field of battle, the coolness of the night restored him to his senses: he reached a village, knocked at the door of the best house, and was received, as the French always are everywhere, when wounded. He was nursed, doctored, and cured; and, better than ever, resumed his road to France one fine morning; and once in France, the road to Paris; and once in Paris, the direction to the rue Triquetonne. But d'Artagnan found his chamber occupied by the complete wardrobe of a man.

"He must be returned," said he. "So much the worse, and yet so much the better." Of course he was thinking of the husband.

He made his inquiries. New waiters, new chambermaid: the hostess was gone out for a walk.

"Alone?" asked d'Artagnan.

"With the master."

"The master is returned, then?"

"Certainly," replied the servant, with great simplicity.

"If I had any money, I would be off," said d'Artagnan to himself; "but as I have none, I must wait, and take counsel with my hostess, as to the way in which I may thwart the conjugal prospects of this importunate spirit."

He had finished his soliloquy—which proves that in great emergencies, nothing is more natural than the soliloquy—when the girl, who was watching at the door, suddenly exclaimed—"Ah, here is madame just returning with the master"

D'Artagnan cast a glance down the street, and descried the hostess turning from the rue Montmartre, *suspended* from the arm of an enormous Swiss, who strutted along in a manner that agreeably reminded him of his old friend Porthos.

"And is that the master?" said d'Artagnan to himself. "Aha! he is grown wonderfully, I think." And he seated himself where he might be easily seen.

The hostess perceived d'Artagnan as she entered, and gave a slight scream. At this little scream, d'Artagnan, concluding that he was discovered, arose, and ran and embraced her tenderly.

The Swiss looked with an air of utter stupefaction at the hostess, who remained very pale.

"Ah! is it you, sir? And what do you want?" she added, in the greatest distress.

"This gentleman is your cousin—or your brother?" said d'Artagnan, with the most complete imperturbility; and without waiting for an answer, he threw himself into the arms of the Helvetian, who allowed himself to be hugged with the most perfect unconcern.

"Who is this man?" he demanded.

The hostess only replied by suffocating sobs.

"Who is this Swiss?" asked d'Artagnan.

"The gentleman is going to espouse me," replied the hostess, in the interval between two spasmodic sobs.

"Your husband, then, is dead at last?" said d'Artagnan.

"What does that *siggennify* to you, sir," said the Swiss.

"It *siggennifies* very much to me," replied d'Artagnan, "seeing that you cannot marry, madame, without my consent; and that—"

"And that—*vat?*" said the Swiss.

"And that—*vat?—vy*, that I will not give it," answered the musketeer.

The Swiss grew as red as a peony. He wore his splendid laced uniform, whilst d'Artagnan was covered with an old gray cloak. The Swiss was six feet three; d'Artagnan only five feet nine. The Swiss considered himself in his own house, and d'Artagnan an intruder.

"*Vill* you come out of *dat?*" said the Swiss, stamping violently, like a man who begins to be seriously angry.

"I? Not at all!" replied d'Artagnan.

"Well, then, we must resort to force." said one of the waiters, who could not comprehend that such a little man would dare to resist such a great one.

"You!" said d'Artagnan, who also began to be angry, and seizing the waiter by the ear:—"you will keep yourself here, in this very place, or I will lug off your ear. As for you, most illustrious descendant of William Tell, you will go and make up a bundle of your things, which must cumber my chamber, and depart as quickly as possible, to look after another hotel.

The Swiss began to laugh most vociferously. "I *debart?*" "said he, and *vy* for?"

"Ah, very well!" said d'Artagnan. "I perceive that you understand French, and speak it most elegantly: so come and take a turn with me, and I will explain everything to you."

The hostess, who knew that d'Artagnan was a most perfect swordsman, began to weep, and tear her hair. D'Artagnan turned to the afflicted fair one. "Then dismiss him, madame," said he.

"*Vat* nonsense!" exclaimed the Swiss, who had required some time to understand the proposition that d'Artagnan had made

him—"*vat* nonsense! Are you mad, to propose me to *make* a turrn *vit* you?"

"I am a lieutenant of his majesty's musketeers, and, consequently, —in everything your superior. But as rank has nothing to do with this affair, but merely our quarters, you understand the custom —the one who first returns, will take possession of the apartment."

D'Artagnan led off the Swiss, in spite of the lamentations of the hostess, who really felt her heart leaning towards her old lover, but who would not have been sorry to give a lesson to this proud musketeer, who had affronted her by the refusal of her hand.

The two adversaries went straight to the trenches of Montmartre. It was night when they reached them. D'Artagnan politely requested the Swiss to give up the chamber, and to return no more. He gave a negative sign, and drew his sword.

"Then you will lie here," said d'Artagnan. "It is a sorry bed; but it is not my fault, for it is your own choice."

And at these words he drew his sword, and crossed that of his opponent. He had to do with a rough fist; but his own suppleness was superior to all force. The rapier of the German could never pass that of the musketeer. The Swiss had received two wounds before he was sensible of them, on account of the extreme cold; nevertheless, loss of blood and consequent exhaustion, obliged him suddenly to sit down.

"There!" said d'Artagnan, "did I not tell you so? You have got yourself into a precious mess, pig-headed that you are! Fortunately, you have only received enough to last you about a fortnight. Remain there, and I will send you your things by the waiter.—Adieu! By the by, I advise you to go to the rue Montorgueil, at the sign of the *Chat qui pelote*; a capital kitchen—that is to say, if the same hostess be there."

And thereupon he returned right merrily to his quarters, despatched the goods and chattels of the Swiss, whom the waiter found still seated in the same place, astounded by the coolness and valour of his adversary.

The waiter, the hostess, and all the household, had the same con

sideration and respect for d'Artagnan, that they would have had for Hercules, had he returned to earth to recommence his twelve labours.

But when he was alone with the hostess—"Now," said he, "fair Madeline, you see the difference between a Swiss and a gentleman. As for you, you have behaved like the keeper of a little pot-house. So much the worse; for you thus lose both my esteem and my custom. I have driven away the Swiss to humble you; but I will no longer lodge here. I will not live where I despise the hostess. Hallo, waiter! carry my portmanteau to the *Maids d'Amour*, rue des Bourdonnais. Adieu, madame!"

D'Artagnan, in uttering these words, was both dignified and pathetic. The hostess threw herself at his feet, begged his pardon, and retained him by a soft compulsion. Why should we say more? The spit was actually turning—the stove roared—the fair Madeline wept. D'Artagnan felt hunger, cold, and love invading him at the same moment: he pardoned her; and, having pardoned, he remained.

And thus it happened that d'Artagnan lodged at the hotel de rue Chevrette, in the rue Triquetonne.

CHAPTER VII.

D'ARTAGNAN IS IN SOME EMBARRASSMENT, BUT ONE OF OUR OLD ACQUAINTANCES COMES TO HIS ASSISTANCE.

D'Artagnan returned to his hotel very pensive, finding considerable pleasure in carying the cardinal's bag, and thinking of the beautiful diamond which had once belonged to him, and which he had seen for an instant shining on his eminence's finger.

"If this diamond should ever again come into my possession," he said to himself, "I will immediately convert it into money, and purchase some property round my father's chateau, which is a handsome mansion, but the only land appertaining to it is a garden, not larger than the cemetery of the Innocents; and there I will

remain in my dignity, till some rich heiress, attracted by my good looks, shall come and marry me. Then I will have three boys: of the first I will make a man of consequence, like Athos; of the second, a handsome soldier, like Porthos; and, of the third, a gentle abbé, like Aramis. Faith, that would be much better than living the life I do. But, unhappily, that skin-flint Mazarin will not give up his diamond for my sake."

What would d'Artagnan have said, had he known that this diamond had been entrusted to the cardinal by the queen, to be given to him!

On entering the rue Triquetonne, he perceived that there was a great tumult there; and a considerable crowd was collected near his quarters.

"Hallo," said he, "can the hotel de la Chevrette be on fire? Or has the husband of the fair Madeline positively returned?"

It was neither the one nor the other. On drawing near, he perceived that it was not before his own hotel, but before the next house, that the crowd was collected. They uttered loud cries; they ran about with torches; and, by the light of these torches, d'Artagnan perceived uniforms.

He inquired what was the matter; and was informed that a citizen, with about twenty of his friends, had attacked a carriage escorted by some of the cardinal's guards; but that a reinforcement had come up, and the citizens had been put to flight. The leader of the mob had taken refuge in the house next to the hotel, and they were now searching it.

In his youth, d'Artagnan would have hastened to assist the soldiers against the citizens. But he had grown quite cool-headed; and, besides, he had a hundred pistoles in his pocket, and did not wish to venture into such a crowd. He therefore entered his hotel, without asking any more questions. Formerly, d'Artagnan always wished to know everything: now he always knew quite enough.

He found the fair Madeline, who, supposing that he would pass the night at the Louvre, as he had intimated his intention, did not expect him. She was, therefore, much rejoiced at his return; the

more especially, as she was much alarmed by what was passing in the street, and moreover, had not now any Swiss to protect her.

She wished, therefore, to enter into conversation with him, and to tell him all that had happened. But d'Artagnan was in a reflective mood, and therefore not in a humour for conversation. She pointed to his supper, smoking hot; but he made her a sign to have it carried up to his room, with the addition of a bottle of old Burgundy.

The fair Madeline was drilled to military obedience: that is to say, to understand a sign. This time, d'Artagnan had deigned to speak: he was, therefore, obeyed with double celerity.

D'Artagnan took his key and his candle, and went up to his chamber. He had contented himself with an apartment in the fourth story, so as not to injure the custom of the house. The respect we have for truth, compels us to confess, that it was just above the gutter, and just below the roof. Here was his tent of Achilles; and he shut himself up in this chamber, whenever he wished to punish the fair Madeline by his absence.

His first care was to enclose his bag in an old desk, which had nothing new but the lock. Then, his supper being served, and his wine brought, he dismissed the waiter, shut the door, and placed himself at table. It was not to reflect, as might be imagined. For d'Artagnan thought that things were never well done, unless each came in its regular order. He was hungry—therefore he supped; and, after supper, he went to bed. D'Artagnan was not one of those persons who think that the night produces wisdom: in the night, d'Artagnan slept. But in the morning, on the contrary, quite fresh, and with all his wits about him, he experienced the best inspirations. For a long time he had had no need of thinking in a morning; but he had always slept in the night.

He awoke at the earliest dawn, sprang from his bed with true military resolution, and walked round his chamber in meditation.

"In the year '43, about six months before the death of the late cardinal, I received a letter from Athos: and where was it?—let me see—oh! it was at the seige of Besançon, I remember—I was in the trenches. And what did he say to me? That he dwelt on a

small property—yes, that's it—a small property. But where was it? I had just read so far, when a gust of wind caried off the letter. Formerly I should have gone after it, although the wind had blown it into the most exposed situation. But youth is a great fault—that is to say when one is no longer young. I allowed my letter to go, and carry Athos's address to the Spaniards, who had nothing to do with it, and might as well have returned it to me. There is no use, therefore, in thinking of Athos. Now let us see—Porthos—I had a letter from him also: he invited me to a great hunting match on his property, for the month of September, 1646. Unfortunately, as I was in Bearn at that time, on account of my father's death, the letter followed me; and I had left before it arrived. But it set off in pursuit of me, and reached Montmedy some days after I had left that city. At last it caught me, in the month of April, but as it was only in the month of April, 1647, that it caught me, and the invitation was for September, 1646, I could not take advantage of it. Let us see—I must look for this letter; it ought to be with the titl-deeds of my property."

D'Artagnan opened an old casket, which lay in a corner of his chamber, filled with parchments relative to the aforesaid property, which had for the last two hundred years passed entirely away from his family; and he uttered an exclamation of joy, as he there descried the gigantic handwriting of Porthos, and, underneath, some lines of the pothooks and hangers traced by the withered hand of his worthy spouse.

D'Artagnan did not amuse himself with reading the letter, for he well knew its contents. He hastened to the address. This was at the Chateau du Vallon. Porthos, however, had forgotten every other direction. In his pride, he imagined that all the world must know the chateau to which he had given his name.

"Plague take the vain fellow!" said d'Artagnan. "Always the same! I was going to commence with him, seeing that he ought not to want money—he who inherited the eight hundred thousand livres of M. Coquenard. There! the best is lost; for Athos must have become an idiot from drinking; and as for Aramis, he must be entirely given up to his devotions."

D'Artagnan again cast his eyes on Porthos's letter. There was a postscript containing this sentence :—

"I write by the same courier to our worthy friend Aramis, at his convent."

"At his convent! Yes, but what convent? There are two hundred in Paris, and three thousand in France. And then, perhaps, on entering his convent, he has, for the third time, changed his name. Ah! if I was a wise theologian, and could only recollect the subject of the thesis which he discussed so well with the curate of Montdidier and the superior of the Jesuits, I might ascertain what doctrine he supported, and might thence infer to what saint he had consecrated himself. What if I went to the cardinal, and demanded an authority to enter every convent? It would be a good idea, and perchance I might discover him. Yes; but it would be to confess, at the very onset, my own incompetency, and from the first I should be ruined in the cardinal's estimation. Men in power are only grateful for the performance of impossibilities. 'If it had been possible,' they say, 'I would have done it myself.' And they are right. But wait a bit. I also received a letter from him, the dear friend, by the same token that he required of me a slight service, which I rendered him. Ah! yes; but where did I put his letter?"

D'Artagnan reflected a moment, and went towards the closet where his old clothes were hung: there he looked for his doublet of the year 1648; and, as he was a lad of method, he found it hung on its peg. He searched the pocket, and drew from it a paper—it was indeed Aramis's letter.

"M. d'Artagnan," it said, "you must know that I have had a quarrel with a gentleman, who has made an appointment with me for this evening, at the Place Royal. As I am in the church, and the affair might injure me if I communicated it to any other than to a friend so faithful as yourself, I write to you, that you may serve as my second. You must enter by the Neuve Sainte Catherine: under the second lamp, to the right, you will find your opponent. I shall be with mine under the third. "Your devoted

"ARAMIS."

Here there was not even an adieu.

D'Artagnan endeavoured to recall the circumstances to his memory. He had gone to the appointment; had there met the opponent indicated, whose name he had never known; had accommodated him with a jolly sword-thrust in the arm; had then gone towards Aramis, who, on his side, had come to meet him, having already finished his affair.

"It is all over," Aramis had said. "I believe I have killed the rascal. But, my dear friend, if you ever want me, you know that I am completely at your service." Upon which Aramis had squeezed his hand, and disappeared under the arcades.

He knew no more, therefore, where Aramis was, than where Athos and Porthos were; and the affair began to be sufficiently embarrassing, when he imagined he heard the noise of a window breaking in his room. He immediately thought of his bag, which was in his desk, and rushed out of the closet. He was not mistaken: at the very moment that he entered by the door, a man came in by the window.

"Ah, wretch!" cried d'Artagnan, taking the man for a robber, and seizing his sword.

"Sir," cried out the man, "in the name of Heaven, put up your sword, and do not kill me without hearing me. I am not a robber —very far from it! I am an honest, well-established citizen, having a house of my own. I am called—— But, is it possible—you are M. d'Artagnan!"

"And you Planchet!" exclaimed the lieutenant.

At your service, sir," said Planchet, in a rapture of delight; "that s to say, if I am yet capable of it."

"Perhaps so," said d'Artagnan; "but what the deuce are you doing, running about on the roofs, at seven o'clock in a cold morning."

"Sir," said Planchet, "you must know— But, in fact, perhaps you must not know."

"Come, let us hear what it is," said d'Artagnan. "But first put a napkin before the window, and draw the curtains."

Planchet obeyed; and, when he had finished,

"Well, then, Planchet?" said d'Artagnan.

"First of all, sir," said the prudent Planchet, "on what terms are you with M. de Rochefort?"

"Why, marvellously good: but you know well enough yourself, that he is now one of my best friends."

"Ah! so much the better."

"But what has Rochefort to do with your entering my chamber in this manner."

"Ah! see there now, sir! First I must tell you that M. de Rochefort is——" Planchet hesitated.

"By Jove!" said d'Artagnan. "I know very well that he is in the Bastile."

"That is to say, he *was* there," answered Planchet.

"How? He was there?" exclaimed d'Artagnan. "Has he, then, had the good fortune to escape?"

"Ah, sir!" cried Planchet, in turn, "if you call it good fortune, all is right. Then I must tell you that it seems that M. de Rochefort was sent for from the Bastile, yesterday evening."

"I know that well; since I was the person who went for him."

"But happily for him, it was not you who carried back; for if I had seen you amongst the escort, believe me, sir, that I have always far too much respect for you—"

"Finish, then, you animal! Let me know what has happened."

"Well, then, it happened that, as the carriage of M. de Rochefort was passing along the middle of the rue de la Ferronnerie, through a knot of people, and that the escort roughly jostled the crowd, some murmurs were excited. The prisoner considered the opportunity favourable, told his name, and cried out for assistance. I was there, and recognised the name of the Count de Rochefort: I remembered that it was he who made me a sergeant in the regiment of Piedmont. I exclaimed that it was a prisoner, a friend of M. de Beaufort. The mob was excited, stopped the horses, and overthrew the escort. In the meantime, I opened the door; M. de Rochefort jumped out, and, was soon lost in the crowd. Unfortunately, a patrol passed just at the time: it joined the guards, and charged us. I beat a retreat towards the rue Triquetonne, but was closely followed. I escaped into the house next to this. They surrounded and searched it; but

in vain. I found in the fifth story a compassionate female, who concealed me between two mattrasses. I remained in my hiding-place until near morning; but, expecting that the search would be renewed, I ventured out on the gutters, first looking for an entrance, and then an exit, in some house which was not watched. That is my tale, sir; and, upon my honour, I shall be in despair if it should be disagreeable to you."

"No," said d'Artagnan; "upon my faith I am very glad that Rochefort is at liberty. But do you know one thing?—that if you fall into the hands of the king's people, you will be hanged without mercy."

"Ah! I know that well enough," replied Planchet; "and that is what disturbs me so much; and it is also the reason that I am so glad to have found you; for if you are willing to conceal me, no one can do it better than yourself."

"Yes," said d'Artagnan, "I wish for nothing better; although I risk neither more nor less than my commission, if it was found out that I harboured a rebel."

"Ah, sir! you know very well, that I would risk my life for you!"

"You might also add, Planchet, that you have risked it. I never forget anything but what I ought to forget; and as to this, I wish to remember it. Sit down there, then, and eat at your ease; for I can perceive that you are casting very eloquent glances at the remnants of my supper."

"Yes, sir; for your neighbour's cupboard was cruelly furnished as to nutriment; and I have eaten nothing since yesterday at noon, but a small roll and some preserve. Although I do not dislike sweets when they come at their proper time and place, I confess I found my supper rather light."

"Poor fellow!" said d'Artagnan. "Well, then, refresh yourself."

'Ah, sir!" cried Planchet, "you save my life a second time."

And he sat himself down, and began to eat as in the glorious days of the rue Fossoyeurs. D'Artagnan continued walking up and down the room. He turned over in his mind what use he could make of

Planchet, under his present circumstances. In the meantime, Planchet was doing all he could to make up for his lost time. At last he emitted that sigh of satisfaction which a hungry man breathes, when, having laid a pretty solid foundation, he begins to make a slight halt.

"And now let us see," said d'Artagnan, who thought that the moment was arrived when he might begin his questions.—"Let us do everything in order. Do you know where Athos is?"

"No, sir," answered Planchet.

"The deuce!" cried d'Artagnan.

"Do you know where Porthos is?"

"Not at all, sir."

"Plague take it!—and Aramis?"

"Not a bit more, sir, but," continued Planchet, in his sharp way, "I know where Bazin is!"

"Ah! you know where Bazin is?"

"Yes, sir."

"And where is he?"

"At Notre-Dame."

"And what is he doing there?"

"He is the beadle."

"What! Bazin beadle at Notre-Dame! Are you sure of this?"

"Quite certain! I have seen and spoken to him."

"He must know where his master is."

"Without the least doubt."

D'Artagnan reflected a moment, then took his cloak and sword, and prepared to go out.

"Sir," cried Planchet, in a most lugubrious voice, "do not abandon me in this manner. Consider that my sole hope is in you."

"But no one will come to look for you here," said d'Artagnan.

"But even if they should not come to look for me," replied the prudent Planchet, "consider that the people of the house, who did not see me come in, will think that I am a thief."

"That's true," said d'Artagnan. "Let us see—can you speak any sort of patois?"

"I can do better than that, sir," answered Planchet: "I can speak Flemish."

"And where the deuce did you learn it?"

"In Artois, where I served for two years. Listen:—'Goeden morgen, mynheer, ich bien begeerig te weeten, uwer gesondheyds' omstand.'"

"And what does that mean?"

"Good morning, sir; I am very anxious to know the state of your health."

"And that you call a language! But never mind," added d'Artagnan, "it will do very well."

He went to the door, called a waiter, and ordered him to tell the fair Madeline to come up.

"What are you doing, sir?" said Planchet: "do you confide my secret to a woman?"

"Make yourself easy; she will not breathe a word to any one."

At the moment the hostess entered. She came up smiling, expecting to find d'Artagnan alone; but drew back with astonishment when she saw Planchet.

"My dear hostess," said d'Artagnan, "allow me to introduce to you your brother, who is just come from Flanders, and whom I take into my service for some time."

"My brother!" cried the hostess, more astonished than ever

"Wish your sister good morning, then, Master Peter."

"Welkom, zuster," said Planchet.

"Goeden dag, broer," replied the astonished hostess.

"Now observe," said d'Artagnan: "this gentleman is your brother, which perhaps you may not know, but I do. He is just come from Amsterdam. You will clothe him during my absence; on my return, you will present him to me; and upon your recommendation, although he cannot speak a word of French, as I can refuse you nothing, I will take him into my service. Do you understand me?"

"That is to say, I guess what you require, and that is all that is necessary," said Madeline.

"You are an invaluable woman, my sweet hostess; and I am grateful to you."

On which, having given a nod of intelligence to Planchet, d'Artagnan went out, to proceed to Notre-Dame.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DIFFERENT EFFECT WHICH HALF A PISTOLE HAS UPON A BEADLE, AND UPON A YOUNG CHORISTER.

D'Artagnan went over the Pont Neuf, congratulating himself on having found Planchet; for, whilst appearing to serve the worthy lad, it was, in fact, Planchet who was serving him. Nothing, in reality, could be more acceptable to him, under his present circumstances, than a brave and intelligent lacquey. It was true that Planchet would not, in all probability, remain long in his service; but even on resuming his domestic position in the rue des Lombards, Planchet would still be under obligations to him, for having saved his life by concealing him; and d'Artagnan was not sorry to have some connexion with the city, at the very time that it was at war with the court. It was like having a secret communication or intercourse with some one in the enemy's camp; and, with a man of such acute intellect as d'Artagnan, slight things might lead to great consequences.

It was, therefore, in a disposition sufficiently contented, both with fortune and himself, that he reached Notre Dame. He mounted the steps, entered the church, and addressing a sacristan, who was sweeping a chapel, he inquired if he knew M. Bazin.

"What, M. Bazin the beadle" said the sacristan?

"The same."

"There he is, officiating at a low mass, in the chapel of the Virgin."

D'Artagnan was quite delighted; for, in spite of what Planchet had said, he that feared he should not find Bazin. But, now that he had got hold of one end of the thread, he was quite satisfied that he would reach the other end.

He went and knelt down opposite the chapel in order that he

might not lose sight of his man. Fortunately it was low mass, which would quickly be finished. D'Artagnan, who had forgotten his prayers, and who had omitted to take a mass-book, employed his leisure in examining Bazin.

Bazin wore his costume, it must be allowed, with as much dignity as holiness. It was easy to see that he had reached, or nearly so, the summit of his ambition, and that the rod, garnished with silver, which he bore in his hand, appeared as honourable to him as the baton which Condé threw, or did not throw, into the enemy's lines at the battle of Fribourg. His outward man had undergone a change, if we may so speak, completely analogous to his costume. His whole body had become rotund, and, as it were, canonical. As to his face, the prominent features appeared to have vanished. His nose was certainly there; but the cheeks, in growing round, had each stolen a part of it. The chin was making its escape into his neck; and something, which was not actually fat, but a sort of pasty puffiness, had almost closed up his eyes. As for his forehead, his hair, cut squarely and reverently, covered it to within three lines of his eyebrows. But we must inform the reader, that Bazin had never possessed, even in its most liberal proportions, more than an inch and half of forehead.

The officiating priest finished the mass at the same time that d'Artagnan did his examination; and he retired on giving the blessing, which all received kneeling. D'Artagnan was surprised to find, in this officiating priest, the coadjutor himself; that is to say, the famous Jean Francois de Gondi, who at that time, foreseeing the character he was about to play, began to distribute alms to make himself popular. And it was to increase that popularity, that he from time to time said one of those matutinal masses which the people alone are accustomed to attend.

D'Artagnan went on his knees like the others, received the benediction, and made the sign of the cross; but at the moment when Bazin passed in his turn, with eyes raised to the skies, and marching humbly in the rear, d'Artagnan pulled him back by the skirt of his gown.

Bazin lowered his eyes, and started as if he had seen a ser-

pent. "M. d'Artagnan!" he exclaimed. "Get thee behind me, Satan!"

"Well now, my dear Bazin," said the officer, "is this the way you recieve an old friend?"

"Sir," replied Bazin, "the true friends of a Christian are those who lead him to salvation, and not those who turn him from it."

"I do not understand you, Bazin," said d'Artagnan; "and I do not see how I can be a stumbling-block in the way of your salvation."

"You forget, sir," replied Bazin, "that you were very near destroying that of my poor master; and that, as far as you were concerned, he would have been lost eternally, by remaining a musketeer, although his calling led him so powerfully towards the church."

"My dear Bazin," replied d'Artagnan, "you ought to perceive, by the place in which you meet me, that I am totally changed. Age brings reason; and, as I doubt not that your master is in the high road to salvation, I am come to ask you where he is, that he may assist me in securing my own."

"Rather say, to take him back with you into the world. Fortunately," continued Bazin, "I do not know where he is; and, as we are in a holy place, I dare not tell a lie."

"How," said d'Artagnan, greatly disappointed, "you do not know where Aramis is?"

"In the first place," replied Bazin, "Aramis was his name of perdition; in Aramis, you find Simara, which is the name of a demon; and, happily for him, he has quitted that name for ever."

"Therefore," said d'Artagnan, determined to be patient to the last, "it is not Aramis that I am seeking, but the Abbè d'Herblay. Come, my dear Bazin, tell me where he is."

"Did you not hear, M. d'Artagnan, that I said I did not know?"

"Yes; but to this I reply, that it is impossible."

"It is nevertheless true, sir—the pure and simple truth."

D'Artagnan saw plainly that he should get nothing out of Bazin. It was quite clear that Bazin lied; but it was with such fervour and determination, that it was evident he meant to stick to it.

"Very well," said d'Artagnan; "since you do not know where your master is, we will talk no more about it. Let us part good friends: here is half a pistole to drink my health."

"I do not drink, sir," answered Bazin, pushing the officer's hand back in a most dignified manner: "it is only good for the laity."

"Incorruptible!" murmured d'Artagnan. "I am really very unfortunate."

And as, whilst making this reflection, he had quitted his hold of Bazin's robe, the worthy beadle took advantage of this to beat a rapid retreat into the sacristy, where he did not deem himself in safety, until he had fastened the door behind him.

D'Artagnan remained motionless, with his eyes fixed on the door which had closed upon Bazin, when he felt some one touch him gently on the shoulder. He turned, and was about to utter an exclamation of surprise, when he who had touched him put his finger on his lips, as an injunction to silence.

"You here, my dear Rochefort!" said d'Artagnan, in a low voice.

"Chut!" said Rochefort; "did you know that I was at liberty?"

"Yes, I knew it from the very best authority."

"And from whom?"

"From Planchet."

"How?—From Planchet?"

"Yes, to be sure: it was he who liberated you."

"Planchet?—Well, I fancied I knew him. Now that proves, my dear fellow, that a benefit is never thrown away."

"And what are you doing here?"

"I came to thank God for my deliverance," answered Rochefort.

"And for what besides? for I presume that is not all."

"And then, to receive the coadjutor's orders, to see if we cannot irritate Mazarin a little."

"What a wrong-headed fellow you are! You will get yourself into the Bastile again."

"Oh! as for that, I will take precious good care, I warrant you. The free air of heaven is so delightful! Therefore," continued

Rochefort, drawing a long breath, "I am going to take a turn into the country."

"And so am I," said d'Artagnan.

"And, without being indiscreet, may I ask where you are going?"

"To look after my friends."

"What friends?"

"Those about whom you inquired yesterday."

"What, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis? Are you looking after them?"

"Yes."

"Upon your honour?"

"And what is there astonishing in that?"

"Oh, nothing! only, it is droll. And for whom are you looking after them?"

"Unfortunately I do not know where they are."

"And you have no means of gaining intelligence of them?" Wait a week, and I will give you some."

"A week! That is too long. I must find them before three days are past."

"Three days," said Rochefort; "that is but a short time, and France is large."

"Never mind. You know the word *must:* with that word, a great deal is accomplished."

"And when do you begin your search?"

"I am now upon it."

"Success to you, then!"

"And a good journey to you!"

"Perhaps we may meet on our road?"

"Not very probable."

"Who knows? Fortune is so capricious."

"Adieu!"

"Fare you well. By the by, should Mazarin speak to you of me, tell him that I requested you to inform him, that he should in a short time see that I was not too old for action."

And Rochefort left him, with one of those diabolical smiles which

had formerly made d'Artagnan so often shudder. But this time he beheld it without emotion, merely smiling in turn, perhaps with an expression of melancholy which this recollection naturally excited.

"Begone, demon!" said he, "and do what you will: it is of little consequence to me. There is not a second Constance in the world!"

On turning round, d'Artagnan saw Bazin, who, having laid aside his ecclesiastical habiliments, was talking to the sacristan whom d'Artagnan had addressed on entering the church. Bazin appeared to be very animated, and was making furious gestures with his little short fat arms. D'Artagnan fancied that he was enjoining the very greatest discretion with regard to himself. Taking advantage of the close attention of the two churchmen, he glided out of the cathedral, and placed himself in ambush at the corner of the rue des Canettes. Bazin could not now leave the church, without being perceived.

Five minutes after, Bazin appeared under the porch. He looked all round, to see that he was not watched, but did not observe our officer, whose head alone appeared round the corner of a house, fifty yards off. With complete self-satisfaction, therefore, he ventured into the rue Notre-Dame; and d'Artagnan emerged from his concealment just in time to see him turn the rue de la Juiverie, and enter, in the rue de la Calandre, a house of very respectable appearance. Therefore our officer did not doubt that this was the abode of the worthy beadle.

D'Artagnan, however, took care not to make any inquiries there. The porter, if there was one, no doubt had his instructions; and if there was not one, whom could he ask? He therefore entered a small tavern, which formed the corner of the rue de la Saint Eloi and of the rue de la Calandre, and asked for a measure of hypocras. It required a good half hour to prepare this liquor properly; and during all this time d'Artagnan could watch Bazin without suspicion.

He remarked in the establishment a sharp-looking little rascal, of about twelve or thirteen years of age, whom he thought he had seen, about twenty minutes before, in the dress of a young chorister. He questioned him; and, as the embryo deacon had no interest in dis-

simulation, he learnt that, from six to nine in the morning, he exercised the office of a young chorister, and, from nine to midnight, that of a waiter at this tavern.

Whilst he was talking with this boy, a horse was led up to Bazin's house, saddled and bridled. A moment after, Bazin himself came down.

"Look," said the boy, "there is our beadle, just going to start."

"And where is he going in that fashion?" asked d'Artagnan.

"I am sure I do not know."

"Half a pistole, if you can find out," said d'Artagnan.

"For me?" demanded the boy, his eyes sparkling with delight. "If I can find out where M. Bazin is going? That will not be very difficult. But you are not mocking me, are you?"

"No, by the honour of an officer. See, there is the half pistole." And he displayed the tempting coin, but without giving it to him.

"Well, I will go and ask him."

"And that is just the way to learn nothing about it," said d'Artagnan. "Wait, then, till he is gone, and after that, pry about, inquire, and get your information. That is your business, and there is the demi-pistole." And he put it into his pocket.

"I understand," said the boy, with that sharp and cunning look which is peculiar to the young rogues of Paris. "Well, then I will wait."

He had not to wait long; five minutes afterwards Bazin set off at a trot, stirring his horse up by thumping him with his umbrella, which, when on horseback, he always used as a whip; and scarcely had he turned the corner of the street, when the boy launched himself like a blood-hound on his track.

D'Artagnan quietly seated himself, perfectly satisfied that, in ten minutes at least, he should know all he wanted. In fact, before that time had elapsed, the boy returned.

"Well," said the boy, "I know it."

"And where is he gone?"

"But am I to have the demi-pistole?"

"Certainly, when you have told me."

"I want to see it. Give me hold of it, that I may be certain it is a good one."

"There it is."

"Master," said the boy, "the gentleman wants change."

The master was at his desk; gave the change, and took the piece of money. The boy pocketed the change.

"And now, where is he gone?" inquired d'Artagnan, who was greatly amused by all these proceedings.

"He is gone to Noisy."

"And how do you know that?"

"Ah! it did not require much wit to find it out. I saw it was the butcher's horse, which he often lets to M. Bazin. Now, thinks I, the butcher does not let such a horse as that, without knowing where he is going, although he might not think that M. Bazin would take his horse further than he engaged."

"And he told you that M. Bazin——"

"Was going to Noisy. Besides, it seems that he often does so—he goes there two or three times a week."

"And do you know Noisy?"

"I should think so, indeed—my nurse lives there."

"Is there a convent at Noisy."

"Yes, a precious fine one too!—a convent of Jesuits."

"Good!" said d'Artagnan; "it is quite clear."

"Then you are satisfied?"

"Yes; and what is your name?"

"Friquet."

D'Artagnan took out his tablets, and wrote the boy's name, with the address of the tavern.

"Tell me, sir," said the boy, "are there any more demi-pistoles to be gained?"

"Perhaps so," replied d'Artagnan. And as he had now got all he wanted, he paid for the hypocras, which he had not drank, and returned quickly to the rue Triquetonne.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW D'ARTAGNAN, WHILST LOOKING FOR ARAMIS, FOUND HIM ON THE CRUPPER, BEHIND PLANCHET.

On entering the hotel, d'Artagnan saw a man seated at the corner of the fire. It was Planchet; but Planchet so well disguised, thanks to some old clothes of the fugitive husband, that he himself could hardly recognise him. Madeline introduced him, before all the waiters; Planchet addressed him in a charming Dutch phrase; the officer answered him in a language spoken by no people under the sun; and the business was settled. Madeline's brother entered into d'Artagnan's service.

D'Artagnan's plan was now completely arranged. He did not wish to reach Noisy before the evening, for fear of being known; he had, therefore, plenty of time before him, as Noisy was not more than three or four leagues from Paris, on the road to Meaux.

He began by making a good substantial breakfast, which is a bad commencement when any one wishes to employ his head, but is an excellent precaution before any bodily exertion. Then he changed his dress, fearing that his lieutenant's uniform might breed distrust. Then he took the strongest and heaviest of his three swords, that he only used on great occasions; and at about two o'clock, he had two horses saddled, and, followed by Planchet, left Paris by the barrier de la Villette. All this time a rigid search was being made for Planchet, in the next house to the hotel de la Chevrette.

At a league and a half from Paris, finding that in his impatience he had set off too early, he stopped to breathe his horses. The inn was filled with people of rather doubtful appearance, who seemed intent upon some nocturnal adventure. A man, enveloped in a cloak, appeared at the door; but perceiving a stranger, he made a sign with his hand, and two of the men, who were drinking, left the house to speak to him.

As for d'Artagnan, he went carelessly up to the hostess, praised her wine which was most horrible stuff, grown at Montreuil, asked her

some questions concerning Noisy, and learnt that there were only two houses of any consequence in that village: one, which belonged to the Archbishop of Paris, where the Duchess de Longueville, his niece, was at this time; and the other, a convent of the Jesuits, which, according to custom, was the property of these worthy fathers. Therefore, there was no danger of any mistake.

At four o'clock, d'Artagnan resumed his journey at a foot pace, for he did not wish to arrive till the night had closed in. Now, as when any one travels on horseback, at a foot-pace, on a winter's day, in dull weather, and on a safe road, he has hardly anything better to do than what La Fontaine says a hare does when on her seat, and that is, to think; therefore, d'Artagnan thought, and so did Planchet. Only, as will be seen, their reveries were different.

One word of the hostess had given a particular direction to d'Artagnan's thoughts; and this word was the name of the Duchess de Longueville. In fact, Madame de Longueville had everything to make a man thoughtful. She was one of the noblest ladies in the realm, and one of the most beautiful women of the court. Married to the old Duc de Longueville, whom she did not love, she had first been considered the lover of Coligny, who was killed for her sake, in a duel, on the Place Royale, by the Duke of Guise; then, she had excited the bitter hatred of her brother, the Prince of Condé; and now she had, it was said, some political connexion with the Prince of Marsillac, the eldest son of the old Duc de Rochefoucault, whom she was in a fair way of making the enemy of her brother, the Prince of Condé.

D'Artagnan thought of all these things. He thought that he had often, when at the Louvre, seen the beautiful Madame de Longueville pass before him, radiant and enchanting. He thought of Aramis, who, without being of more consequence than himself, had formerly been the lover of Madame de Chevreuse, who was, at the former court, what Madame de Longueville was at this; and he asked himself, why there are some persons in the world who are successful in all they undertake—some in ambition, others in love—whilst there are others, who remain, whether by chance, by bad fortune, or by some natural impediment, arrested in their midway

course towards the attainment of every object. He was obliged to confess, that, in spite of talent and address, he was, and probably would continue to be, one of these last, when Planchet drew near and addressed him.

"I wager, sir, that you are thinking of the same thing that I am."

"I much doubt it, Planchet," said d'Artagnan, smiling: "but of what are you thinking? Come, let us hear."

"I am thinking, sir, of those ill-looking fellows, who were drinking in the inn where we stopped."

"Always the prudent Planchet."

"It is by instinct, sir."

"Well, come, let us hear what your instinct says under these circumstances."

"Sir, my instinct said, that these people were collected together at that inn for some bad purpose; and I was reflecting on what my instinct told me, in the darkest corner of the stable, when a man, enveloped in a cloak, entered the stable, followed by two others."

"Aha!" said d'Artagnan, Planchet's account agreeing with his own observations: "well, what then?"

"One of these two men said—'He must be at Noisy, or come there this evening; for I recognised his servant,—'Are you quite sure?' said the man in the cloak.—'Yes, my prince!'"

"My prince!" interrupted d'Artagnan.

"Yes—my prince! But listen then:—'If he should be there, tell us distinctly what we must do,' said the other man.—'What must you do?' repeated the prince.—'Yes: he is not a man to allow himself to be taken in that manner—he will use his sword.'—'Well, then, you must do as he does. Nevertheless, endeavour to take him alive. Have you some cord to bind him, and a gag to put over his mouth?'—'Yes, we have got everything ready.'—'Remember that he will, in all probability, be disguised as a private gentleman.'—'Oh, yes, your excellence, you may be quite easy.'—'Besides, I shall be there, and will give you the proper instructions.'—'And you will insure us that justice—'—'I am responsible for everthing,

said the prince—'That is right, and we will do our best.'—And upon that they left the stable."

"Well," said d'Artagnan, "and what has all this to do with us? It is one of those enterprises which take place every day."

"And you feel satisfied that it is not directed against us?"

"Against us. And why?"

"'Consider their words:—'I recognised his servant,' one of them said; which may well refer to me."

"And after that?"

"'He must be at Noisy, or come there this evening,' said the other; which may well refer to you."

"And then?"

"Afterwards the prince said, 'Remember that in all probability he will be disguised as a private gentleman;' which does not appear to leave any doubt; for you are dressed as a private gentleman, and not as an officer of musketeers. Well, what do you say to that?"

"Alas, my dear Planchet," said d'Artagnan, sighing deeply, "I say that, unfortunately, so far as I am concerned, the time is past when princes wish to assassinate me. Ah! those were fine times! Do not disturb yourself, therefore: those people have nothing to do with us."

"Are you quite sure, sir?"

"I will answer for it."

"Very well; then we will talk no more about it."

And Planchet resumed his place in the rear, with that profound confidence which he always had in his master, and which fifteen years' separation had not changed.

In this manner they went about a league, at the end of which Planchet again approached his master? "Sir!" said he.

"Well?" answered d'Artagnan.

"Look that way, sir," continued Planchet. "Does it not appear to you that something like shadows are passing there, in the midst of the darkness? Listen: I fancy that the sound of horses may be heard."

"Impossible!" said d'Artagnan. "The ground is softened by

the rains. And yet, as you say, I fancy that I can see something." And he stopped to look and listen.

"If we cannot hear the horses' steps, we can at any rate hear them neigh."

And in fact the neighing of a horse struck on d'Artagnan's ear through the dark obscurity.

"These are our men," said he, "who are now on the road. But we have nothing to do with it. Let us proceed."

And they went on again. In about half an hour they reached the first houses of Noisy. It was now about half-past eight in the evening; and, according to country habits, everybody was in bed, and not a single light was to be seen in all the village.

D'Artagnan and Planchet continued their route. To the right and left of their road, the dark and irregular line of roofs cut sharp upon the dull sky. From time to time, a dog barked behind a door; or a frightened cat ran quietly from the middle of the street to take refuge in a pile of faggots, whence her eyes glared like burning coals. These were the only living creatures that appeared to inhabit this village. About the middle of the town, overlooking the principal place, rose a dark mass, standing between two lanes, in front of which some enormous lime trees spread their slender arms. D'Artagnan examined this building with attention.

"This must be the archbishop's chateau," said he to Planchet—"the abode of the beautiful Madame de Longueville. But where is the convent?"

"The convent?" responded Planchet: "oh, that is at the end of the village. I know it well."

"Well, then," said d'Artagnan, "there is just time, whilst I tighten my horse's girths, for you to gallop there, and to return and tell me whether there is a light burning at any window in the Jesuits' house."

Planchet obeyed, and was instantly lost in the darkness; whilst d'Artagnan dismounted and tightened his girths.

In about five minutes Planchet returned. "Sir," said he, "there is a light at a window which looks towards the fields."

"Hum!" said d'Artagnan; "if I were a frondeur, I would knock

here, and should be sure of a good bed. If I were a monk, I would knock down yonder, and should be sure of a good supper. But as I am neither, it is very possible that we may sleep on the hard ground, dying with hunger and thirst."

"Yes," added Planchet, "like the famous ass of Buridan. In the meantime, would you like me to knock?"

"Chut!" said d'Artagnan. "The only window which was illumined, is just left in obscurity."

"Do you hear, sir?" inquired Planchet.

"Ah, what is that noise?"

It was, in effect, like the dull sound of an approaching storm. At the same moment, two troops of horsemen, each of about ten men, issued from the two lanes which bounded each side of the house, and closing every avenue, surrounded d'Artagnan and Planchet.

"Heyday!" said d'Artagnan drawing his sword, and ensconcing himself behind his horse, whilst Planchet executed the same manœuvre, "can you have divined truly, and do they really mean this against us?"

"There he is! We have got him!" cried the horsemen, rushing towards d'Artagnan, sword in hand.

"Do not let him escape," said a commanding voice.

"No, your excellence, you may depend on that."

D'Artagnan thought the time was now come for him to join in the conversation. "Halloo, gentlemen," said he, in his Gascon ascent, "what do you want?"

"You shall soon know," shouted the horsemen in chorus.

"Stop! stop!" cried he whom they called your excellence: "stop, on your lives! It is not his voice."

"Aha, gentlemen," said d'Artagnan, "are you peradventure mad at Noisy? Only take care of yourselves; for I warn you, that the first man who comes within the reach of my sword, and it is a pretty long one, will have it throgh his body."

The leader came up. "What are you doing here?" demanded he, in a haughty voice, accustomed to command.

"And you, yourself, what are you doing here?" cried d'Artagnan.

"Be civil, or you shall be well curried; for although I may not wish to give my name, I will be respected, as my rank demands."

"You do not wish to give your name, because you are leading an ambush; but I, who am quietly travelling with my servant, have not the same reasons for concealing mine."

"Enough! enough!—And what is your name?"

"I tell my name, that you may know where to find me, sir, your excellence, or my prince, by whichsoever of these titles you are pleased to be called," said our Gascon, who did not wish to appear to yield to a threat. "Do you know M. d'Artagnan?"

'Lieutenant of the king's musketeers?" inquired the voice.

'The same."

"Yes, certainly."

"Well, then, you must have heard that he has a strong wrist and a sharp sword?"

"You are M. d'Artagnan?'

"I am."

"Then you are come here to defend him?"

"Him! and what him?"

"Him whom we seek."

"It seems," said d'Artagnan "that thinking to come to Noisy, I entered the kingdom of riddles.'

"Come, answer!" cried the same haughty voice: "are you waiting for him under this window? Did you come to Noisy to defend him?"

"I am waiting for no one," replied d'Artagnan, who began to lose his temper. "I mean to defend no one but myself; and myself I will defend vigorously, I assure you."

"Very well, then," said the voice, "go along with you, and leave the place free for us."

"Leave this place!" continued d'Artagnan, with whose plans this order interfered: "it is no such easy matter; seeing that I and my horse are overwhelmed with fatigue; unless, indeed, you feel disposed to offer me a supper and a bed in the neighbourhood."

'Rascal!" exclaimed the voice.

"Halloo, sir! regulate your language a little, I beseech you; for, if you use a second term like that, were you a marquis, duke, prince, or king, I will make you swallow it again, do you see?"

"Come, come," said the leader, "there is no mistake. It is really a Gascon who speaks, and, consequently, not the person we are looking for. Our plan has failed for this evening: let us retire. We shall meet again, M. d'Artagnan," added the leader, raising his voice.

"Yes; but never under the same advantages," replied the Gascon, bantering him; "for when you meet me again, perhaps you will be alone, and it may be daylight!"

"Very well—very well!" said the voice. "Forward, gentlemen!"

And the troop, murmuring and grumbling, disappeared in the darkness, going towards Paris.

D'Artagnan and Planchet remained a moment on the defensive; but as the sound lessened, they sheathed their swords.

"You see clearly, you fool," said d'Artagnan, with the greatest coolness, "that they were not looking after us."

"But whom, then, were they seeking?" asked Planchet.

"Faith, I know not; neither do I care. What I want is to get into the Jesuits' convent: therefore, mount your horse, and go and knock there. Come what may, they will not eat us!" And d'Artagnan remounted his horse.

Planchet had just done the same, when an unexpected weight fell on the hind part of his horse, which nearly fell down.

"Oh, sir," cried Planchet, "there is a man behind me!"

D'Artagnan turned, and saw, in fact, two human forms on Planchet's horse.

"Is it the devil who follows us?" said he, drawing his sword, and preparing to charge the intruder.

"No, my dear d'Artagnan," answered this intruder, "it is not the devil: it is me—it is Aramis! Gallop on, Planchet; and at the end of the village, turn to the left."

And Planchet, carrying Aramis on the crupper, set off at a gallop, followed by d'Artagnan, who began to fancy that he was in some incoherent and fantastic dream.

CHAPTER X.

THE ABBE D'HERBLAY.

At the end of the village, Planchet turned to the left, as Aramis had desired him, and stopped under the window which had a light in it. Aramis jumped down, and clapped his hands three times. Instantly the window opened, and a rope ladder was let down.

"My dear fellow," said Aramis, "if you will mount, I shall be delighted to see you."

"Ah!" cried d'Artagnan, "is that the way you enter your house?"

"After nine at night it is necessary, by Jove! The rules of the convent are monstrously severe."

"Pardon me, my dear Aramis," said d'Artagnan; "I imagined that you said by Jove!"

"Do you think so?" replied Aramis, laughing. "It is possible. You cannot conceive, my dear fellow, how one gets into bad habits in these cursed convents, and what bad manners all those churchmen have, with whom I am obliged to associate. But you do not ascend."

"Go first, and I follow you, as the late cardinal said to the late king—'to show you the way, sire.'"

Aramis nimbly mounted the ladder, and in an instant had reached the window. D'Artagnan mounted after him, but more gently. It was very perceptible that this kind of road was less familiar to him than to his friend.

"I beg your pardon," said Aramis, seeing his friend's awkwardness: "had I foreseen your visit, I would have had the gardener's ladder; but for myself alone this is quite sufficient."

"Sir," said Planchet, when he saw that his master had nearly accomplished his ascent, "this is all very well for M. Aramis, and for you also; and, indeed, it would do very well for me, but—the two horses cannot mount the ladder."

"Lead them under that shed," said Aramis, pointing to a building on the plain: "you will there find some straw and oats for them."

"But for myself?" inquired Planchet.

"You will return under this window, clap your hands three times, and we will hand you down some provisions. Make yourself easy, my good fellow: no one dies of hunger here. Go along with you." And Aramis, drawing the ladder after him, shut the window.

D'Artagnan examined the room. Never had he seen an apartment more warlike, and at the same time more elegant. At each corner were military trophies, offering to the sight and the hand swords of every kind; whilst four large pictures represented the Cardinal of Lorraine, the Cardinal Richelieu, the Cardinal Lavalette, and the Archbishop of Bordeaux, all in their warlike costume. Nor did the garniture of the chamber, in other respects, at all indicate the abode of an abbé. The hangings were of damask; the carpet came from Alençon; and the bed, especially, was more like that of a coquette, with its furniture of lace, and its embroidered coverlet, than that of a man who had made a vow to reach heaven by abstinence and maceration.

"You are inspecting my den, are you?" said Aramis. "Ah, my dear fellow, excuse me; what would you have? I am lodged like an hermit. But what are you looking for?"

"I want to know who threw you the rope-ladder. I can see no one; and yet the ladder could not descend by itself."

"No—it was Bazin."

"Aha!" said d'Artagnan.

"But," continued Aramis, "M. Bazin is a well-drilled servant, who, seeing that I did not return alone, discreetly retired. Sit down, my dear friend, let us have some talk." And Aramis pushed a large easy-chair towards d'Artagnan, on which he reclined most comfortably.

"In the first place, you will sup with me, will you not?" said Aramis.

"Yes, if you really wish it," replied d'Artagnan; and I confess that it will be with the very greatest pleasure, for the ride has given me a most infernal appetite."

"Ah! my poor friend," said Aramis, "you will find but meagre fare here, for you were not expected."

"And am I threatened with an omelette de Crevecœur, and with 'theobromes?'—Was not that the name you gave to the spinach?"

"Oh! we may hope," replied Aramis, "that, by the assistance of Bazin, we shall find something better in the larder of the good Jesuits.—Bazin. my friend," continued Aramis, "come hither."

The door opened, and Bazin appeared; but, on seeing d'Artagnan, he uttered a cry of desqair.

"My dear Bazin," said d'Artagnan, "I am quite delighted to see with what perfect coolness you lie, even in a church."

"Sir," replied Bazin, "I have learnt from the good fathers of the Jesuits, that it is allowable to lie, when it is done with a good purpose."

"Very well—very well, Bazin. M. d'Artagnan is dying with hunger, and I also. Therefore, give us the best supper you can; and, more especially, let us have some good wine."

Bazin bowed in token of obedience, heaved a deep sigh, and left the room.

"Now that we are alone, my dear Aramis," said d'Artagnan, turning his eyes from the apartment to its inhabitant, and terminating his examination by observing his dress—"tell me where the deuce you came from, when you dropped on to Planchet's crupper?"

"Ah, by Jove!" repiled Aramis, "you know well enough:—from heaven."

"From heaven!" exclaimed d'Artagnan, shaking his head. "You have as little of the appearance of one just come from heaven, as you have of one who is likely ever to go there!"

"My dear friend," said Aramis, with an air of simplicity which d'Artagnan had never perceived whilst he was a musketeer—"if I did not come from heaven, at all events I came from paradise—which is much the same thing."

'Then the learned have at length settled the question," replied d'Artagnan. "Up to this time, they could not agree as to the precise situation of Paradise. Some placed it on Mount Ararat; others, between the Tigris and the Euphrates; but it seems that they looked for it a great way off, when it was very near. Paradise is at Noisy-le-Sec, on the site of the chateau of the Archbishop of Paris. The way to leave it is not by the door, but by the window; you must descend, not by the steps of a marble arcade, but by the branches of a lime tree; and the angel with the flaming sword which guards it, has changed his heavenly name, from that of Gabriel, to the more earthly one of the Prince de Marsillac."

Aramis could not restrain his laughter. "You were always a pleasant companion, my dear friend," said he, "and you have not lost your witty Gascon humour. Yes, there is some little truth in what you say. Only, do not imagine that I am in love with Madame de Longueville."

"Plague on it! I will take good care of that," cried d'Artagnan. "After having been so long in love with Madame de Chevreuse, you could not possibly have transferred your affections to her mortal enemy!"

"Yes, that is true," replied Aramis, in a careless manner. "Yes, the poor duchess—I loved her very much formerly; and to give her her due, she was mighty useful to us. But what would you have! She was obliged to leave France. That cursed cardinal was such a rough tilter," continued Aramis, casting a glance at the ancient minister's portrait: "he had given orders to arrest her, and to carry her to the castle of Loches. Fath, he would have cut off her head, as he did for Chalois, Montmorency, and Cinq-Mars, had she not escaped, disguised as a man, with that poor little Kitty. And a strange adventure happened to her, in I know not what village, as I have heard, with I know not what curé of a parish, whose hospitality she demanded, and who, having only one chamber, and taking her for a gentleman, offered to share it with her. She certainly wore a man's dress, in a most incredible manner, did dear Mary. I know only one woman who does it as well: therefore the following couplet has been made upon her:—

'' Oh, pray Laboissière, say!' &c.

Do you know it?"

"No; sing it to me, my dear fellow."

And Aramis began, in a most gallant manner.

"Oh, pray Laboissière, say!
Am I not *au fait*
At sitting on my horse as a cavalier?"
"You stride your gallent steed,
With stirrups long indeed,
And career amid the guards as an halberdier."

"Bravo!" cried d'Artagnan. "You sing as well as ever, my dear Aramis; and I find that the mass has not spoiled your voice."

"My dear fellow," answered Aramis, "you must understand that as, when I was a musketeer, I mounted guard as seldom as possible; so, now that I am an abbé, I say as few masses as I can help. But let us return to our poor duchess."

"Which?—The duchess de Chevreuse, or the duchess de Longueville?"

"My dear fellow, I have told you that there is nothing between me and the duchess de Longueville. Did you ever see her on her return from Brussels, after the king's death?"

'Yes, certainly; and she was still very beautiful."

'Yes," continued Aramis; "therefore I saw her sometimes at that period, and gave her some excellent advice, of which she did not take advantage. I assured her that Mazarin was the queen's lover. But she would not believe me, saying, that she knew Anne of Austria, and that she was too proud to love such a pitiful fellow. Then she threw herself into the cabal of the Duke of Beaufort, and that pitiful rascal caused the duke to be arrested, and banished Madame de Chevreuse."

"You know, I suppose," said d'Artagnan, "that she has obtained permission to return?"

"Yes; and that she is returned. She will be again committing some folly."

"But this time, perhaps, she will follow your advice."

"Oh! as to this time," said Aramis, I have not seen her: she is greatly changed."

"That is not the case with you, my dear Aramis, for you are just the same: you have got the same handsome black hair, the same elegant figure, and the same delicate hands."

"Yes," answered Aramis, "I take great care of myself. Do you know, my dear fellow, I am getting old? I am almost thirty seven."

"Now, as we have met, my dear fellow," said d'Artagnan, smiling, "let us settle one thing; that, is the age we shall be for the future."

"What do you mean?" said Aramis.

"Why," replied d'Artagnan, "formerly, I was your junior by two or three years, and, if I am not mistaken, I have completed my fortieth year."

"Really," said Aramis. "Then it is I that must be mistaken; for you were always an admirable mathematician. By your account, therefore, I must be forty-three years old. The deuce! My dear fellow, you must not go and tell this at the hotel de Rambouillet: it would do me great harm."

"Be assured that I will not go there," said d'Artagnan.

"But what can that animal, Bazin, be doing?" cried Aramis. "Quick, then, you rascal! We are dying of hunger and thirst."

Bazin, who entered at this moment, raised his hands, filled with botttles, up to heaven.

"Are you ready at last?" demanded Aramis.

"Yes, sir, directly," answered Bazin; "but it requires some time to bring up all these things."

"Because you fancy that you have got your beadle's gown on your shoulders," broke in Aramis, "and that you pass all your time in reading your breviary. But I warn you, that if, from being always engaged polishing all those things in the chapel, you neglect to furbish up my sword, I will make a great fire of all your blessed images, and roast you alive with them."

Bazin, much scandalized, made the sign of the cross with one of the bottles. As for d'Artagnan, more than ever surprised at the

tone and manners of the Abbé d'Herblay, which were so different from those of Aramis the musketeer, he remained with his eyes fixed in open astonishment on his face.

Bazin quickly covered the table with a damask cloth, and on it arranged so many delicate, delicious, and tempting things, that d'Artagnan was quite astounded.

"You must have expected some one?" said the officer.

"Oh!" cried Aramis, "I have alway something in case of need; besides, I knew that you were looking after me."

"From whom?"

"From Bazin, who took you for the devil, my dear fellow, and who hastened here to warn me of the danger that threatened my soul if I received such bad company as an officer of musketeers."

"Oh sir!" cried Bazin, joining his hands with an air of entreaty.

"Come, no hypocrisy! you know that I do not like it. You would do much better to open the window and lower some bread, a chicken, and a bottle of wine to your friend Planchet, who has been killing himself for the last hour with clapping his hands."

In fact, Planchet, after having fed his horses, had returned to the window, and had three or four times repeated the signal agreed upon.

Bazin obeyed, fastened the articles mentioned to the end of a cord, and lowered them to Planchet, who, desiring nothing more, retired with them into his shed.

"Now let us sup," said Aramis.

The two friends placed themselves at table, and Aramis began to cut up a fowl, some partridges, and ham, with true gastronomic skill.

"Plague take it," said d'Artagnan, "how you live!"

"Yes, pretty well. The coadjutor has procured me a dispensation from Rome for fast-days, on account of my health. Then, you must know I have taken for my cook the ex-cook of Lafollone, the cardinal's old friend, that famous gourmand, who, for grace after dinner, always said—'I pray for power to digest all I have eaten!'"

'Which did not prevent his dying of indigestion," said d'Artagnan.

"What would you have?" replied Aramis, with an air of resignation: "no one can avoid his destiny."

"Will you pardon me, my dear fellow," said d'Artagnan, "for the question I am about to ask you?"

"Oh! you know that there can be no ceremony between us."

"Are you, then, become rich?"

"Oh, by no means. I make about twelve thousand livres a year, independent of a small benefice which the prince gave me."

"And how do you make this twelve thousand livres a year?" inquired d'Artagnan. "Is it by your poems?"

"No, I have renounced poetry, except occasionally to make a drinking song, or some love sonnet, or innocent epigram. I make sermons, my dear fellow."

"Sermons?"

"Oh, yes, splendid sermons, do you see—at least, they are considered so."

"Which you preach?"

"No—which I sell."

"To whom?"

"To those of my brethren who are ambitious of being thought fine preachers."

"Ah, really! And have you not been tempted to gain the same reputation for yourself?"

"Yes, my dear fellow; but nature carries the day. When I am in the pulpit, if a pretty woman looks at me, I look at her again; if she smiles, I smile; then speak at random, and, instead of talking of the torments of hell, I speak of the joys of Paradise. See, now, what happened to me one day at the church of St. Louis, at Marais. A gentleman laughed in my face. I left off, to tell him that he was a fool. The people went out to pick up stones; but, in the mean time, I so changed the feelings of the assembly, that it was the gentleman they stoned. It is true, he called upon me the next day, thinking he had to do with an abbé of the common stamp."

"And what was the result of this adventure?" inquired d'Artagnan, holding his sides with laughter.

"Why, that we made an appointment for the next day, on the Place Royale; and, by Jove, you know something about that."

"And was it against that impertinent fellow that I served as your second?" said d'Artagnan.

"Exactly so. You saw how I settled his business."

"And did he die?"

"I have not the least idea. But, at all events, I gave him absolution *in articulo mortis!* It is enough to kill the body, without killing the soul."

Bazin made a sign of despair, which meant that he approved of the morality, but not of the tone in which it was uttered.

"Bazin, my friend," said Aramis, "you do not observe that I can see you in the mirror, and that I have strictly forbidden any sign of approbation or disapprobation. You will therefore do me the pleasure of putting the Spanish wine on to the table, and retiring to your own apartment. Besides, my friend, M. d'Artagnan, has something confidential to say to me. Is it not so, d'Artagnan?"

D'Artagnan gave a sign of assent, and Bazin retired, after having placed the Spanish wine upon the table.

The two friends being alone, remained a few minutes silent. Aramis appeared to be waiting for a soft digestion. D'Artagnan was preparing his exordium. Each cast a furtive glance at the other. Aramis first broke the silence.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TWO GASPARDS.

"What are you thinking of, d'Artagnan?" said he, "and which of your thoughts brings that smile upon your features?"

"I am thinking, my dear fellow, that, whilst you were a musketeer, you always leant towards the abbé; and, now that you are an abbé, you appear to me to incline much towards the musketeer."

"It is true," replied Aramis, laughing—"man, you know, my dear d'Artagnan, is a strange animal—a complete system of contradictions. Since I have become an abbé, I dream of nothing but battles."

"That is evident enough by your furniture: you have swords of every description, and suited to the most fastidious tastes. Do you fence as well as ever?"

"Yes, I fence as you did formerly—perhaps even better. I practice every day."

"And with whom?"

"With a most excellent fencing-master that we have here?"

"How—here!"

"Yes, here, in this convent, my dear fellow. There are some of all sorts in a convent of Jesuits."

"Then you would have killed M. de Marsillac, if he had come alone to attack you, instead of with his twenty men?"

"Most assuredly," replied Aramis; "and even at the head of his twenty men, if I could have drawn my sword without being recognised."

"God forgive me!" said d'Artagnan, in a low voice, "but I believe that he has actually become more Gascon than myself." Then he added, aloud—"Well, my dear Aramis, you asked me why I sought you."

"No," said Aramis, in his sharp manner, "I did not ask you; but I am waiting that you may tell me."

"Well, then, I sought you frankly to offer you the means of killing M. de Marsillac when you like, prince although he be."

"Come, come," said Aramis, "that is an idea!"

"Of which I invite you to take advantage, my dear fellow. Come—with your benefice of a thousand ecus, and the twelve thousand livres that you make by your sermons—are you rich? Answer me frankly."

"I?—No, I am as poor as Job; and, by thoroughly rummaging my pockets and coffers, I verily believe that you could not find an hundred pistoles."

"Plague take it!—an hundred pistoles—and that he calls being

as poor as Job! If I had so much always at hand, I should consider myself as rich as Crœsus." Then d'Artagnan inquired—"Are you ambitious?"

"As Encelade!"

"Well, then, my friend, I give you the opportunity of becoming rich, powerful, and free to do anything you wish."

The shadow of a cloud passed across Aramis's forehead, as rapidly as that which moves over a field of corn in the month of August; but rapid as it was, it did not escape d'Artagnan's observation.

"Speak," said Aramis.

"One more question first. Do you think at all of the politics of the times?"

A flash glanced from Aramis's eyes as rapidly as the cloud which had passed across his brow; but this, also, did not escape d'Artagnan.

"No," replied Aramis.

"Therefore any propositions would suit you, as you have not for the time any other master than God," said the Gascon, laughing.

"It is possible."

"Have you, my dear Aramis, sometimes thought of those bright days of our youth, which we passed amid laughter, drinking, and fighting?"

"Yes, certainly; and more than once I have regretted them. It was a happy time! *Delectabile tempus!*"

"Well, then, my dear fellow, those bright days may be renewed —that happy time may return! I have received a commission to go and find my companions; and I wished to commence with you, who were the soul of our association."

Aramis bowed in a manner that was more polished than affectionate. "To lead me back to politics," said he in a languishing voice, and throwing himself back in his chair: "ah! my dear d'Artagnan, you see what a regular and easy life I lead; and we have, as you well know, experienced the ingratitude of the great."

"It is true," replied d'Artagnan, "but perhaps the great people repent of their ingratitude."

"In that case," said Aramis "it would be quite another thing.

There is pardon for every sin. Besides, you are right on one point —which is, that if one felt any desire to mingle in affairs of state, the time is just ripe for it."

"And how do you know that—you, who do not busy yourself with politics?"

"Ah, my friend, without engaging personally in them, I live in a circle which is much occupied with them. Even in cultivating poetry, or in making love, I am connected with M. Sarrasin, who is most intimate with M. de Conti—with M. Voiture, who is the friend of the coadjutor—and with M. de Bois-Robert, who, since he no longer belongs to Cardinal Richelieu, is attached to no one, or to all the world, whichever you like; so that the political movement has not entirely escaped me."

"I suspected so," said d'Artagnan.

"Besides, my dear fellow, do not take all I am going to say for the words of a hermit—of a man who speaks like an echo, by purely and simply repeating what he has heard," continued Aramis. "I have heard that, at this moment, the Cardinal Mazarin is very much disturbed by the appearance of affairs. It seems that his orders do not command that respect which was formerly paid to those of our ancient bugbear, the late cardinal, whose picture you see here; for, whatever may be said of him, it must be confessed, my dear fellow, that he was a great man."

"I will not contradict you on that point, my dear Aramis. It was he who made me a lieutenant."

"My first impression," continued Aramis, "was entirely in favour of the cardinal. I said to myself, a minister is never loved; but, with the talent which he confessedly has, he will finish by triumphing over his enemies, and will make himself feared, which, in my opinion, is perhaps better than being loved."

D'Artagnan gave a nod, which signified that he wholly approved this doubtful maxim.

"You see," continued Aramis, "what was my first opinion; but, as I am profoundly ignorant on such subjects as these, and as the humility which I profess compels me not to trust to my own judgment, I made inquiries. Well, then, my dear friend—"

"Well, and what then?" inquired d'Artagnan.

"Well, then," replied Aramis, "I must mortify my pride, and confess that I was mistaken."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, as I have said, I made inquiries, and the answers which I have received from many persons, all of different tastes and pursuits, have satisfied me that M. de Mazarin is not a man of talent, as I at first imagined."

"Bah!" cried d'Artagnan.

"No; he is simply a man of no consideration, who was the servant of Cardinal Bentivoglio, and has thrust himself forward by intrigue; an upstart, a nameless man, who, in France, will only act as a partisan. He will heap up loads of wealth, will much dilapidate the king's revenues, will put into his own pocket the pensions which Cardinal Richelieu dispensed to all the world, but will never govern firmly, nobly, and honourably. It appears, also, that this minister is neither a gentleman in manners, or at heart, but a sort of buffoon, a punchinello, a pantaloon. Do you know him? I have not that pleasure."

"Ah!" said d'Artagnan, "there is some truth in what you say."

"Well, you flatter me extremely, my dear fellow, if, gifted as I am by nature, with a certain vulgar penetration, I can agree with such a man as you, who are living at court."

"But you have spoken of him personally, and not of his party and resources."

"That is true. He has the queen with him."

"Which is something, I think."

"But he has not the king."

"A mere boy."

"Yet a boy who will attain his majority in four years."

"But it is of the present time that I speak."

"Yes, but not the future. And even at present, he has neither the parliament nor the people for him, which is the money—neither the nobility nor the princes, which is the sword."

D'Artagnan scratched his ear. He was obliged to confess to him-

self, that this was not only an enlightened but a just view of affairs.

"Judge now, my dear friend, whether I still possess my usual penetration. But perhaps I am wrong in speaking so openly to you, who appear to me to have a leaning towards Mazarin."

"I!" exclaimed d'Artagnan; "not the least in the world."

"But you were speaking of some commission."

"Did I speak of some commission? Then I was wrong. No; I said to myself, as you did—affairs are getting embroiled: let us throw the feather into the air, and follow whither the wind blows. Let us resume our life of adventure. We were four valiant knights—four hearts, warmly united. Let us again unite—not our hearts, for they have never been separated—but our fortunes and courage. The opportunity is favourable to gain something better than a diamond."

"You were right, d'Artagnan; always right," continued Aramis; "and the proof is, that I had the same idea; only, not having your nervous and fertile imagination, it was suggested to me. Every one now wants auxiliaries. Propositions have been made to me. Something has transpired about our famous exploits of old; and I will frankly tell you that the coadjutor has applied to me."

"What, M. de Gondi, the cardinal's enemy?" exclaimed d'Artagnan.

"No, but the king's friend," replied Aramis—"the king's friend, do you understand! Well, the point would be to serve the king, which is also the duty of a gentleman."

"But the king is with Mazarin, my dear fellow."

"In fact, but not in mind—in appearance, but not at heart; and that is exactly the snare which is laid for the poor boy by his enemies."

"Come, now! but this is civil war which you are honestly proposing to me, my dear Aramis."

"War for the king."

"But the king will be at the head of the army, where Mazarin is."

"But his heart will be with the army, which will be commanded by M. de Beaufort."

"M. de Beaufort! Why, he is at Vincennes."

"Did I say M. de Beaufort?" inquired Aramis. "M. de Beaufort, or some other person—M. de Beaufort or M. le Prince."

"But M. le Prince is going to the army, and is entirely devoted to the cardinal."

"I fear," said Aramis, "that there are some discussions between them just at this time. But if not M. le Prince, it will be M. de Conti."

"But M. de Conti will soon be a cardinal; they are now trying to get him a hat."

"Well, have there not been many warlike cardinals? There, see around you four cardinals, who, at the head of armies, equalled M. de Guébriant or M. de Gassion."

"But a humpbacked general!"

"Under his cuirass, his hump will not be seen. Besides, do you not remember that Alexander was lame, and Hannibal had but one eye."

"And do you perceive great advantages in this party?"

"I perceive the protection of powerful princes!"

"With the proscription of the government."

"Annulled by the parliaments and the opposition."

"All this might happen as you say, if they could manage to separate the king from his mother."

"Perhaps that may happen."

"Never!" exclaimed d'Artagnan, this time speaking from conviction. "I appeal to you, Aramis—to you, who know Anne of Austria as well as I do. Do you think that she can ever forget that her son constitutes her safety, her palladium, the pledge of her consideration, her fortune, and her life? She must rather pass over with him to the party of the princes, abandoning Mazarin; but you know, better than any one, that there are potent reasons why she should never forsake him."

"Perhaps you are right," said Aramis, thoughtfully; "therefore I will not enter into any engagement."

"With them," said d'Artagnan, "but with me?"

"With no one. I am a priest; therefore what have I to do with

politics? I do not read any breviary. I have a small circle of roguish abbés, full of wit, and of charming women; and the more disturbed affairs become, the less likelihood is there of my pranks being observed. Everything, therefore, goes on marvellously well, without my being mixed up with it; and decidedly, my dear fellow, I will have nothing to do with it."

"Well, my dear Aramis," said d'Artagnan, "upon my honour, your philosophy makes a convert of me, and I know not what devil of an ambitious mania had seized me. I have a commission which supports me. At the death of poor M. de Treville, who is getting old, I may become captain. It is a very excellent marshal's baton for a Gascon recruit; and I find that I am attached to the charms of a humble but daily bread. Therefore I will accept the invitations of our friend Porthos, and will go and hunt on his estate. You know that he has estates, do you not?"

"Yes, indeed, I believe I do. Ten leagues of wood, of marsh, and of valleys. He is lord of the hill and of the plain; and is at law with the Bishop of Noyon on account of some feudal rights."

"Good!" said d'Artagnan to himself. "That is just what I wanted to ascertain—Porthos is in Picardy." Then he added aloud, "And he has resumed his old name of du Vallon?"

"To which he has annexed that of de Bracieux an estate which, by my faith, was formerly a barony!"

"So that we shall see Porthos a baron?"

"I do not doubt it. The Baroness Porthos will be more especially admirable."

And the two friends laughed heartily.

"Therefore," replied d'Artagnan, "you have no wish to join Mazarin?"

"Nor you the Princes?"

"No. Let us join no one, then; and, whilst we continue friends, let us be neither cardinalists nor frondeurs."

"Yes," said Aramis, "let us be musketeers."

"Even with the little collar," exclaimed d'Artagnan.

"More especially with the little collar," said Aramis, "for it is that which constitutes the charm."

"Therefore, adieu," said d'Artagnan.

"I will not detain you, my dear fellow," replied Aramis. "I cannot give you a bed here; and it would not be respectful to offer you half of Planchet's shed."

"Besides, I am scarcely three leagues from Paris; the horses are refreshed, and in less than an hour I can reach home."

And d'Artagnan poured himself out a last glass of wine.

"To our days of old," said he.

"Yes," responded Aramis, "unfortunately it is time long since gone by: *fugit irreparabile tempus.*"

"Bah!" replied d'Artagnan, "it will perhaps return. At all events, if you should want me, rue Triquetonne, hotel de la Chevrette."

"And I at the convent of the Jesuits—by the door, from six in the morning to eight at night, and by the window, from eight at night to six in the morning."

"Adieu, my dear fellow!"

"Oh! I do not part with you thus. Let me attend you." And he took up his sword and cloak.

"He wishes to be assured of my departure," said d'Artagnan to himself.

Aramis whistled for Bazin; but as Bazin was sleeping in the antechamber, over the remnants of the supper, Aramis was obliged to pull him by the ear to awaken him. Bazin stretched his arms, rubbed his eyes, and endeavoured to rouse himself.

"Come, come, master sleeper—quick—the ladder!"

"Why," said Bazin, yawning as if he would dislocate his jaw, "the rope-ladder is still at the window."

"The other—the gardener's. Did you not perceive that M. d'Artagnan could scarcely mount? He will, therefore, have much greater difficulty in descending."

D'Artagnan was just going to assure him that he could get down very well, when an idea entered his head, and this made him hold his tongue.

Bazin heaved a profound sigh, as he went out to look for the

ladder. A moment after, a strong and steady ladder was fixed against the window.

" Come, now," said d'Artagnan, " that is what I call a good means of communication: even a woman could get up such a ladder as that."

A penetrating glance shot from Aramis's eye, as if it wished to search the very bottom of his friend's heart; but d'Artagnan sustained the scrutiny with his usual admirable coolness. Besides, at that moment he had put his foot on the first step of the ladder, and was beginning to descend. In another moment he was on the ground. Bazin remained at the window.

" Remain there," cried Aramis; " I shall return directly."

They went towards the shed; and at their approach, Planchet came out, holding the two horses by the bridle.

" Excellent!" said Aramis. " There is an active and vigilant servant; not like that lazy Bazin, who is really worth nothing since he has become a churchman. Follow us, Planchet. We will converse to the end of the village."

In fact, the two friends conversed on indifferent subjects whilst they traversed the whole village. Then, when they reached the last houses—

" Go, then, my dear friend," said Aramis—" follow your career. Fortune smiles on you; let her not escape. Remember that she is a jilt, and treat her accordingly. As for me, I remain in my humility and my indolence. Adieu."

" Therefore it is perfectly decided," said d'Artagnan: " what I offered does not suit you?"

" On the contrary, it would suit me mighty well," replied Aramis; " but, I repeat that I am, in truth, a combination of contraditions: what I hate to-day, I may adore to-morrow; and *vice versâ*. You perceive that I could not engage like yourself, for example, who have fixed principles."

" You lie, you rogue," said d'Artagnan to himsel : " you are, on the contrary, the only one who knows how to make choice of an object, and to proceed towards it in mysterious obscurity."

" Adieu, then, my dear fellow," continued Aramis, " and thanks

for your kind intentions; and, more than all, for the pleasing recollections which your presence has awakened."

They embraced. Planchet was already on horseback, and d'Artagnan mounted in turn. Then they again pressed hands, each horseman spurred his horse, and went off towards Paris.

Aramis remained motionless in the middle of the street until they were out of sight.

But after having proceeded about two hundred paces, d'Artagnan stopped short, jumped down, threw his bridle to Planchet, and took his pistols from the holsters, and placed them in his belt.

"What is the matter, sir?" inquired Planchet, much frightened.

"Why the matter is," answered d'Artagnan, "that, cunning as he is, it shall not be said that I am his dupe. Remain here. Do not stir. Only put yourself on the other side of the road, and wait for me."

With these words d'Artagnan jumped over the ditch which bounded the road, and ran across the plain, so as to turn round the village. He had remarked, between the house which Madame de Longueville inhabited and the convent, an open space, only closed by a hedge. Perhaps he would have had some difficulty, an hour before, in finding this hedge; but the moon had just risen, and although it was occasionally hidden by clouds, he could see sufficiently to find his way even when it was obscured.

D'Artagnan therefore gained the hedge, and concealed himself behind it. On passing the house, before which the scene we have described took place, he remarked that there was again a light at the same window, and he was convinced that Aramis had not yet re-entered, and that, when he again entered, it would not be alone.

In fact, in a few minutes he heard approaching steps, and the dull sound of voices speaking low. At the end of the hedge the steps ceased. D'Artagnan put one knee to the ground, endeavouring to conceal himself behind the thickest part of the hedge.

Just at this moment, to his great astonishment, two men appeared; but his astonishment soon ceased, for he heard a soft and harmonious voice: one of these persons was a woman disguised as a man.

"Do not distress yourself, my dear René," said the soft voice;

"the same thing will not occur again. I have discovered a kind of subterranean passage which leads under the street, and we shall only have to raise one of the flag-stones which are before the door to open for you an entrance and an exit."

"Oh!" said another voice, which d'Artagnan recognised as that of Aramis, "I swear, princess, that if your reputation were not at stake, and that I only hazarded my life—

"Yes, I know that you are as brave and adventurous as any man in the world. But you do not belong to me only, but to our party. Be prudent, therefore, and cautious."

"I am always obedient, madame," answered Aramis, when I receive commands in such a soft voice." And he tenderly kissed her hand.

"Ah!" exclaimed the cavalier with the soft voice.

"What?" demanded Aramis.

"Do you not see that the wind has carried off my hat."

Aramis rushed after it. D'Artagnan took advantage of this circumstance to seek for a thinner place in the hedge, through which he might more clearly see this mysterious cavalier. Just at this moment also, the moon, perhaps as curious as the officer, came from behind a cloud, and, by its imprudent light, d'Artagnan recognised the large blue eyes, the golden hair, and the noble head of the Duchess of Longueville.

Aramis returned laughing, with one hat on his head, and another in his hand, and they both went towards the convent of the Jesuits.

"Good!" said d'Artagnan, getting up and brushing his knee: "now I have you; you are a frondeur, and Madame de Longueville's lover."

CHAPTER XII.

M. PORTHOS DU VALLON DE BRACIEUX DE PIERREFONDS.

Thanks to the information which he had gained from Aramis, d'Artagnan knew that Porthos, whose family name was du Vallon, had added to it that of de Bracieux, being the name of his estate, and that he was at law with the bishop of Noyon. It was therefore in the neighbourhood of Noyon that he must look for this estate; that is, on the borders of the Isle of France and of Picardy.

His route was quickly settled. He would go to Dampmartin, whence two roads branched out, one leading to Soissons, the other to Compiegne; there he would gain some information about the estate of de Bracieux, and, according to that information, he would either go straight forward, or turn to the left.

Planchet, who, was not yet quite at his ease respecting the prank he had played, declared that he would follow d'Artagnan to the end of the world, whether he went straight forward or turned to the left; only, he entreated his master to set off in the evening, being more likely to avoid detection in the dark. D'Artagnan then advised him to send information of his safety to his wife, to relieve her anxiety; but Planchet answered, with much sagacity, that he was quite certain that his wife would not die of anxiety from not knowing where he was; whilst he, being perfectly aware of the glibness and laxity of her tongue, would inevitably die of anxiety if she did know it.

These reasons seemed so cogent, that d'Artagnan did not further press his recommendation; and about eight o'clock in the evening, just as the fog began to spread over the streets, he left the hotel de la Chevrette, and followed, by Planchet, issued forth from the capital by the Porte Saint Denis.

By midnight, the travellers were at Dampmartin. It was too late to make any inquiries. The host of the *Cygne de la Croix* was in bed. D'Artagnan therefore deferred everything till the following day.

Next morning he sent for the host. He was one of those crafty Normans who answer neither yes nor no, and who always think that they compromise themselves by giving a direct answer. Therefore, merely understanding that he must go straight forward, d'Artagnan again took the road on this equivocal information. At nine in the morning he was at Nanteuil, where he stopped to breakfast. Here the host was an honest, open-hearted Picard, who, finding that Planchet was his countryman, did not hesitate in giving the information required. The estate of de Bracieux was some leagues from Villers-Cotterets.

D'Artagnan knew Villers-Cotterets, which was at this period a royal residence, whither, on two or three occasions, he had followed the court. He therefore proceeded towards this town, and dismounted at the *Dauphin d'or*, that being the hotel he usually frequented there. The information here became still more satisfactory: he learnt that the estate of de Bracieux was situated four leagues from the town, but that Porthos must not be sought for there. Porthos had really had some disputes with the bishop of Noyon concerning the estate of Pierrefonds, which bounded his own; and, fatigued by all these legal disputes, which he could not understand, he had, to terminate them, bought Pierrefonds; so that he had added this new appellation to his other titles, and now styled himself du Vallon de Bracieux de Pierrefonds, and lived on his new purchase. For want of a better illustration, Porthos evidently copied the Marquis of Carabas.

They were obliged again to wait till the morrow. The horses had travelled ten leagues during the day, and were tired. They might have taken others, it is true; but they had to pass through a large forest, and Planchet, it may be remembered, did not like forests at night. There was another thing, also, which Planchet did not like; and that was, to set out fasting. Therefore, when he awoke, d'Artagnan found his breakfast ready, and, as he could not complain of such an attention, he placed himself at table. It is to be understood that Planchet, on resuming his ancient functions, had also resumed his ancient humility, and was not more ashamed of eating the remnants of d'Artagnan's meals, than Madame de

Motteville and Madame de Fargis were of eating those of Anne of Austria.

They could not therefore set out until about eight o'clock. It was impossible to make any mistake: they had only to follow the road which leads from Villers-Cotterets to Compiegne, and, on leaving the wood, to turn to the right.

It was a beautiful spring morning, the birds were singing in the large trees, and the broad rays of the sun shot across the glades, resembling curtains of gilded gauze. In other spots, the light scarcely penetrated the thick leafy vaults, and the stems of the old oaks (up which the active squirrels were running, frightened by the travellers) were plunged in umbrageous obscurity. Nature breathed forth its delicious morning perfumes from the herbs and flowers gladdening the heart of man. D'Artagnan, tired of the fœtid odours of Paris, thought to himself, that any one bearing the names of three estates must be very happy in such a paradise. Then he shook his head, saying, "If I were Porthos, and d'Artagnan came to make me the proposition which I am going to make Porthos, I know very well the answer I should give d'Artagnan."

As for Planchet, he thought of nothing: he was digesting.

At the extremity of the wood, d'Artagnan perceived the road indicated; and, at the end of the road, the towers of an enormous feudal castle.

"So ho!" he murmured, "I should fancy that this castle belonged to the elder branch of the Orleans family. Has Porthos been dealing with the Duke de Longueville?"

"Faith, sir," said Planchet, "here are lands in good order. If they belong to M. Porthos, I must congratulate him."

"Zounds!" cried d'Artagnan, "do not call him Porthos, nor even du Vallon. You must call him either de Bracieux or de Pierrefonds, otherwise my embassy will fail."

As they drew near the castle which had attracted their observation, d'Artagnan perceived that his friend could not reside there. The towers, although solid, were open, as if gutted: it seemed as if some giant had riven them with a hatchet.

Having reached the end of the road, d'Artagnan found that it

commanded a view of a charming valley, at the bottom of which, and at the extremity of a pretty little lake, were scattered a few humble cottages, some with tiles and others with thatch, which seemed to acknowledge as their feudal superior a handsome chateau, built about the commencement of the reign of Henry IV., and surmounted by the lordly weathercocks. D'Artagnan did not now doubt that he saw the abode of Porthos.

The road led in a straight line to this handsome chateau, which compared with its ancestor. the chateau de la Montagne, was like a fop who associated with the Duc d'Enghien, by the side of a barbed knight of the times of Charles VII. D'Artagnan put his horse to a trot, and followed the road, Planchet regulating his pace by that of his master.

In about ten minutes d'Artagnan found himself entering an avenue of beautiful poplars, which terminated in an iron gate, of which the spikes and transverse bars were gilded. In the middle of this avenue they saw a noble-looking person, dressed in green and gold like the gate, and mounted on a powerful war-horse. On his right and left were two valets, laced at every seam ; and a considerable number of poor people were paying the most respectful attentions to him.

" Ah !" cried d'Artagnan, " can this be the Lord du Vallon de Bracieux de Pierrefonds ? How he is rolled out since his name was Porthos !"

" It cannot he him, sir," said Planchet. " M. Porthos was six feet four, and this man is not more than five feet four."

" And yet," said d'Artagnan, " they are treating this gentleman with great respect."

At these words d'Artagnan hastened towards the large horse, the great man, and his valets. As he approached him, he fancied that he recognised his features.

" Oh, Lord, sir," cried Planchet, who also thought that he recollected him, " can it possibly be him ?"

At this exclamation the man on horseback gently and in a most majestic manner turned his head, and the travellers could perceive

the two great eyes, shining in all their brightness, the rosy face, and the eloquent smile, of the redoubtable Mousqueton.

It really was Mousqueton—Mousqueton, fat as butter, overflowing with health, and puffed out with good living — who, on seeing d'Artagnan, unlike that hypocrite Bazin, let himself gently glide from his horse, and, hat in hand, went up to the officer, so that the homage of the assembled crowd was transferred to this nobler planet, which had thus eclipsed that of lesser magnitude.

"M. d'Artagnan ! M. d'Artagnan !" burst from Mousqueton's enormous cheeks, which were actually perspiring with delight. "M. d'Artagnan ! oh, what joy for my lord and master, M. du Vallon de Bracieux de Pierrefonds."

"Ah, Mousqueton, then your master is here ?"

"You are on his domains, sir !"

"But how splendid you are—how fat and flourishing you are grown !" continued d'Artagnan, thus commenting on the wondrous changes which good fortune had wrought on the ancient starveling.

"Ah, yes, God be thanked, sir," said Mousqueton, "I am pretty well."

"But have you nothing to say to your old friend, Planchet ?"

"To my friend Planchet ! And is it you, Planchet ?" exclaimed Mousqueton, with open arms, and eyes filled with tears.

"Myself," answered the prudent Planchet; "but I wished to be certain that you were not become proud."

"Proud to mine ancient friend ? Never, Planchet ! You could not think so, or—you do not know Mousqueton."

"Well and good !" returned Planchet, dismounting, and, in turn, opening his arms to Mousqueton. "You are not like that cur, Bazin, who left me two hours under a shed, without even pretending to remember me."

And Planchet and Mousqueton embraced with an affection which touched all the spectators, and made them believe that Planchet was some nobleman in disguise, so highly did they estimate Mousqueton's exalted position.

"And now, sir," said Mousqueton, when he had released himself

from the embrace of Planchet, who had vainly endeavoured to join his hands behind his friend's back—" and now, sir, permit me to leave you, for I do not wish that my master should learn the news of your arrival from any one but myself. He would never pardon me if I allowed it to precede me."

" My dear friend, therefore," said d'Artagnan, not giving Porthos either his ancient or his modern name, " has not forgotten me?"

" Forgotten!" exclaimed Mousqueton: " there is not a day in which we have not expected to hear that you were named a marshal, either in the place of M. de Gassion, or of M. de Bassompierre."

D'Artagnan gave one of those melancholy smiles, which had outlived, in the depths of his heart, the false and fleeting hopes of his youthful days

" And you, clowns," continued Mousqueton, " remain near M. le Comte d'Artagnan, and pay him every respect, whilst I apprize his excellence of his arrival."

And remounting his enormous horse by the assistance of two charitable souls, whilst the more nimble Planchet mounted his without assistance, Mousqueton took a gentle gallop on the turf, evidently thinking more of the ease of his own back, than of his horse's legs.

" Ah, this is a good commencement," said d'Artagnan. " No mysteries, no cloaks, no politics here; but, in their stead, hearty laughter, and tears of joy. I see nothing but faces an ell wide. Really, nature herself appears to be welcoming us; and, instead of leaves and flowers, one might almost fancy that the trees are covered with green and red ribands."

" And I," said Planchet, " think that I perceive the most delectable odour of roast meat—I fancy that I see the scullions ranged in order to mark our approach. Ah, sir, what a cook must M. de Pierrefonds have—he who loved good living so much when he was called M. Porthos."

" Halt there!" said d'Artagnan. " If reality the equals the appearance, I am lost. A man who is so happy will never forsake his enjoyments; and I shall fail here, as I did with Aramis."

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW D'ARTAGNAN DISCOVERED, DURING HIS VISIT TO PORTHOS, THAT FORTUNE DOES NOT ENSURE HAPPINESS.

D'Artagnan passed through the gate, and found himself opposite the chateau: he had just dismounted, when a gigantic personage appeared on the steps. Let us do d'Artagnan the justice to say, that his heart beat with delight on seeing that lofty and martial figure, which reminded him of a brave and excellent man.

He ran to Porthos, and threw himself into his arms. The whole establishment of lacqueys, ranged in a circle at a respectful distance, looked on with humble curiosity; whilst Mousqueton, in front, was wiping his eyes, for the poor fellow had been crying with joy ever since he first saw Planchet and d'Artagnan.

Porthos took his friend by the arm. "Ah! what joy again to see you, dear d'Artagnan," he exclaimed, in a voice which, from a baritone, had become bass: "you have not then forgotten me?"

"Forget you! Oh, dear du Vallon, can one forget the bright days of one's youth, and our devoted friends, and the perils we have confronted together? Really, on seeing you, every instant of our former life recurs to my memory."

"Yes, yes," said Porthos, endeavouring to restore that coquettish twist to his moustache, which it had lost in his retirement— yes, we did perform some fine actions in our time, and gave but a ruffled skein to that poor cardinal to unravel."

And he heaved a sigh. D'Artagnan looked at him.

"At any rate," continued Porthos, in a languishing tone, "you are most welcome, my dear friend. You will assist me to recover my happiness. To-morrow we will hunt the hare in my plains, which are superb, or the roebuck in my woods, which are magnificent. I have four of the swiftest greyhounds in the province, and a mute unequalled for twenty miles round." And Porthos heaved another sigh.

"Oh, oh," thought d'Artagnan to himself, "is the rogue less happy than he seems?"

Then he said aloud—"But first, you must introduce me to Madame du Vallon, for I recollect a certain kind letter of invitation which you sent me, and at the bottom of which she was so obliging as to add a few lines."

Porthos gave a third sigh. "I have lost Madame du Vallon two years," said he, "and you see me yet in affliction. It was for that I quitted my chateau du Vallon, near Corbeil, to come and live on my estate of de Bracieux, which induced me to make this purchase. Poor Madame du Vallon! She was a woman of uneven temper," continued Porthos, making a grimace of regret, "but she at last became accustomed to my ways, and gratefully received my little attentions."

"Therefore you are rich, and free?" said d'Artagnan.

"Alas!" replied Porthos, "I am a widower, and have an income of forty thousand livres. Come, let us breakfast. Will you like it?"

"Very much indeed," said d'Artagnan. "The morning air has given me an appetite."

"Yes," said Porthos," my air is excellent."

They entered the chateau. There was nothing but gold from top to bottom: the cornices were gilt, the mouldings were gilt, the wood of the easy chairs was gilt. There was a table ready covered.

"You here see," said Porthos, "my usual breakfast."

"Ah!" cried d'Artagnan, "without any compliment to you, sir, the king has not so good a one."

"Yes," said Porthos, "I have heard that M. Mazarin feeds him but badly. Taste this cutlet, my dear d'Artagnan: it is of my own mutton."

"You have very tender mutton," said d'Artagnan, "and I congratulate you upon it."

"Yes, they are fed on my pastures, which are excellent."

"Give me another supply."

"No, take a piece of this hare, which I shot yesterday in one of my preserves."

"What a flavour!" cried d'Artagnan: "do you feed your hares upon thyme?"

"And what do you think of my wine?" inquired Porthos. "It is agreeable, is it not."

"It is charming."

"And yet it is of home growth."

"Really!"

"Yes, looking a little to the south there, under that hill—it produces about twenty barrels."

"But it is a regular vintage!"

Porthos sighed for the fifth time—for d'Artagnan had counted his sighs.

"But, my dear friend," said he, curious to solve this problem, "it seems as if something distressed you: perhaps you are not well. Is your health——"

"Excellent, my dear fellow—better than ever. I could kill an ox with a blow of my fist."

"Then some family distress or other—"

"Family! Happily I have but myself."

"What, then, is it that makes you sigh?"

"My dear fellow," said he, "I will frankly tell you that I am not happy."

"You not happy, Porthos! You who have a chateau, pastures, mountains, woods—you who have an income of forty thousand livres a-year—and you not happy!"

"My dear fellow, I have all this, but I am solitary in the midst of it."

"Ah! I understand. You are surrounded by low people, whom you cannot visit without lessening your own consequence."

Porthos slightly changed colour, and swallowed an enormous glass of his small wine.

"No," said he, "on the contrary. Imagine to yourself a set of country gentlemen, all of whom have some title or other, and who pretend to spring from Pharamond and Charlemagne, or at the very least from Hugh Capet. Being the last arrival, I was to make the first advances. I did make them; but you know, my dear friend, that Madame du Vallon—"

Porthos, on uttering these words, appeared to have some difficulty in avoiding a choking fit.

"The nobility of Madame du Vallon's ancestry," continued Porthos, "was rather doubtful. I do not think I give you any information that you did not know before, d'Artagnan, when I tell you that her first husband was an attorney. They considered that disgusting. They said disgusting—that was the term—and you can comprehend that it was a word which might make one kill thirty thousand men. I did kill two; and although that made the others hold their tongues, it did not make them my friends. So that I have no society. I live alone; I am weary of my life; and my mind preys upon itself."

D'Artagnan smiled: he saw the defect in the armour, and prepared his blow.

"But, after all, you are yourself their equal, and your wife cannot degrade you."

"Yes, but you understand, not being of that historical noblesse like the Coucy, who were contented to remain *sires*, and the Rohans, who would not be made Dukes, all these gentry, who are either viscounts or counts, take precedence of me in the ceremonies, and I can say nothing. Ah! if I were only—"

"A baron—is it not so?" said d'Artagnan, finishing the sentence for his friend.

"Ah!" exclaimed Porthos, whose features expanded, "ah, if I was a baron."

"Good!" thought d'Artagnan, "I shall succeed here. Well, then, my dear friend," he said aloud, "the title you wish for I come to bring you to-day."

Porthos gave a jump which shook the whole room; three or four bottles lost their balance, and fell to the ground, where they were broken. Mousqueton ran in at the noise; and, in the perspective, Planchet was seen with his mouth full, and a napkin in his hand.

"Did his excellency call?" inquired Mousqueton.

Porthos made him a sign to pick up the bottles.

"I am delighted to see," said d'Artagnan, "that you have still got that brave fellow with you."

"He is my steward," said Porthos. Then elevating his voice:

"he has done pretty well, the rascal, that is plain enough; but [in a lower key] he loves me, and nothing would induce him to leave me."

"And he calls him 'your excellency,'" thought d'Artagnan.

"Leave the room, Mouston," said Porthos.

"You say Mouston? I suppose for sake of abbreviation: Mousqueton was too long to pronounce."

"Yes," replied Porthos; "and, besides, you might smell the quarter-master a league off. But we were talking of business when that rogue entered," continued Porthos.

'Yes," said d'Artagnan, "yet we had better defer our conversation. Your people might suspect something, and there may also chance to be spies in this country. You understand, Porthos, that affairs of the very greatest consequence are at stake."

'Zounds!" cried Porthos. "Very well, then, to promote digestion, let us take a turn in my park.

"Willingly."

And, as both had taken enough of breakfast, they began to make the tour of a splendid garden. Alleys of chestnuts and limes enclosed a space of about thirty acres; the end of each avenue was thick with copse-wood and shrubs, in which the rabbits were seen running about, vanishing among the beech trees, and sporting in the long grass.

"Faith," said d'Artagnan, "the park corresponds with every thing else; and if there are as many fish in your stews, as there are rabbits in your warrens, you are a happy man, my dear Porthos, provided that you have still the same love of shooting, and have also acquired that of fishing."

"My friend," said Porthos, "I leave the fishing to Mousqueton. It is a vulgar amusement. But I sometimes shoot; that is, when I am tired of doing nothing, I seat myself on one of these marble benches, I send for my gun, and for Gredinet, my favourite dog, and I shoot rabbits."

"Well, that is very amusing," said d'Artagnan.

"Yes," replied Porthos, with a sigh, "it is very amusing."

D'Artagnan did not count the sighs any longer.

"Then," continued Porthos, "Grediuet goes for them, and carries them himself to the cook: he is trained to that."

'Ah! the charming little beast," exclaimed d'Artagnan.

"But," resumed Porthos, "let us leave Grediuet, whom I will give you if you wish it, for I begin to be tired of him, and let us return to our business."

"Willingly," said d'Artagnan; "only, I warn you, my dear friend, that you may not say that I have deceived you, that it will be necessary for you entirely to change your mode of life."

"And how is that?"

"To resume your armour, to gird on your sword, to run after adventures, to leave, as of old, some portion of your skin on the road; in fine, you know our old ways."

"Ah, the deuce!" cried Porthos.

"Yes, I understand. You are spoiled for action, my dear friend. You have run to stomach, and the wrist has not now that elasticity of which the cardinal's guards had such severe proofs."

"Ah, the wrist is yet good, I assure you," replied Porthos, stretching out a hand as big as a shoulder of mutton.

"So much the better."

"Then we are to make war—are we?"

"Oh, yes, to be sure."

"And against whom?"

"Have you been following the politics of the day, my dear friend?"

"I? not in the least."

"Then are you for Mazarin or for the princes?"

"I? I am not for any one."

"That is to say, that you are for us. So much the better, Porthos: it is an excellent position to profit by circumstances. Well then, my dear fellow, I will tell you that I am come on the part of the cardinal."

This word had an effect upon Porthos, similar to what it would have had in the year 1640, and if they had been treating with the true cardinal.

"Oh, oh!" cried he, "and what does his eminence want with me?"

"His eminence wishes to have you in his service."

"And who mentioned me to him?"

"Rochefort. Do you remember him?"

"Yes, by Jove! He who gave us so much trouble, and who made us bustle about so much—the same whom you wounded three times?"

"But are you not aware that he is become our friend?" inquired d'Artagnan.

"No, I did not know it. So, he does not bear malice?"

"You are mistaken, Porthos," said d'Artagnan: "it is I who do not bear it."

Porthos did not clearly comprehend this distinction; but it may be remembered that comprehension was not his strong point.

"You say, therefore," he continued, "that it was the Count de Rochefort who spoke to the cardinal about me?"

"Yes; and then to the queen."

"What! to the queen?"

"Who, to inspire us with confidance, has placed in Mazarin's hand that famous diamond, which you know I sold to M. des Essarts, and which, I know not how, came again into her possession."

"But it seems to me," observed Porthos, with his plain good sense, "that she would have done better to return it to you."

"That is also my opinion," said d'Artagnan; "but what would you have! kings and queens have often singular fancies; and, after all, as they are the persons who hold riches and honours, and who dispense wealth and titles, people are devoted to them."

"Yes, they are devoted to them," said Porthos: "therefore you are devoted, at this present time—"

"To the king, the queen, and the cardinal; and, more than that, I have answered for your devotion."

"And you say that you have made certain conditions for me?"

"Magnificent, my dear fellow, magnificent! In the first place, you have money, have you not? An income of forty thousand livres, as you told me."

Porthos began to be a little suspicious. "Ah, my friend," said he, "one has never too much money. Madame de Vallon left us

involved inheritance. I am no great scholar, so that I live rather from day to day."

"He fears that I am come to borrow money of him," thought d'Artagnan. "Ah, my dear fellow," said he aloud, "if you are in difficulties, so much the better."

"How, so much the better?" demanded Porthos.

"Because his eminence will give all you want—land, money, and titles."

"Ah! ah! ah!" cried Porthos, opening his eyes at the last word.

"Under the other cardinal," continued d'Artagnan, "we did not know how to take advantage of fortune. That was really the case —I do not say as to you, for you had your forty thousand livres of rent, in perspective, and appear to me to be the happiest man on earth."

Porthos sighed.

"However, in spite of your forty thousand livres of rent," continued d'Artagnan, "or rather, perhaps, on account of your forty thousand livres of rent, it seems to me that a small coronet would look very well on your carriage—eh?"

"Why—yes," said Porthos.

"Well, then, win it, my dear fellow: it is at the end of your sword. We shall not interfere with each other: your object is a title; mine is money. If I can win enough to enable me to rebuild d'Artagnan, which my ancestors, impoverished by the crusades, have ever since allowed to fall into ruin, and to purchase about thirty acres around it, it is all I require. I will then retire, and die peaceably."

"And I," said Porthos, "wish to be a baron."

"You shall be one."

"And have you not thought of our other friends?" demanded Porthos.

"Yes, I have seen Aramis."

"Well, and what does he want?—To be a bishop?"

"Aramis," said d'Artagnan, not wishing to destroy his friend's illusions, "Aramis, you must understand, my dear fellow, is become

a monk and a Jesuit, and lives like a bear. He renounces everything, and only thinks of his salvation. My offers could bring him to no decision."

"So much the worse," said Porthos, "for he was a man of talent. And Athos?"

"I have not yet seen him; but, on quitting you, I shall go and visit him. Do you know where I can find him?"

"Near Blois, on a small estate which he inherited from I know not what relation."

"And what name does it bear?"

"Bragelonne. Do you understand, my dear fellow, what Athos, who was as noble as the emperor, and who inherits an estate carrying with it the title of count—what can he do with all those countships—Count de la Fère, Count de Bragellonne?"

"And with all that he has no children;" said d'Artagnan.

"Aha!" said Porthos, "I have heard of a young man whom he had adopted, and who, it is said, much resembles him in countenance."

"Athos! our Athos! who was as virtuous as Scipio. Have you ever seen him?"

"No."

"Well, I will go to-morrow, and carry him some news about you. Between ourselves, I fear that his love of wine may have much aged and degraded him."

"Yes," said Porthos, "it is true; he drank very hard."

"Then, he was also the eldest of us," said d'Artagnan.

"By a few years only," replied Porthos; "but his grave air caused him to look much older."

"Yes, that's true. Therefore if we can get Athos, so much the better; if not, why we must do without him. We two alone are worth a dozen."

"Yes," said Porthos, smiling at the recollection of his ancient exploits; but we four should be worth thirty-six; more especially as you say the affair is rather difficult."

"Difficult for recruits, but not for us."

"Will it be of long continuance?"

"Why, yes; it may last three or four years."

"Shall we have much fighting?"

"I hope so."

"So much the better, after all—so much the better!" exclaimed Porthos. "You can have no idea how my bones snap and crack since I have been here. Sometimes on a Sunday, when I come from mass, I ride over the meadows and fields of my neighbours, to pick up some good little quarrel—for I perceive that I want it—but I find nothing, my dear fellow. Whether they respect or fear me, which last is perhaps the most probable, they let me trample down their lucerne with my dogs, ride full gallop over every one, and I return, quite tired of doing nothing. That is the truth! But tell me, is it easier to fight in Paris now?"

"As for that, my dear fellow, it is quite delightful. No more edicts, no cardinal's guards, no more Jussacs, or other bloodhounds. By Jove! do you see, under a lamp, in a tavern, in short, any where, are you for Mazarin, are you a frondeur, they lug out, and all is settled. M. de Guise killed M. de Coligny openly in the Place Royale, and no notice was taken of it.

"Ah, that is right!" said Porthos.

"And then, in a short time," continued d'Artagnan, "we shall have pitched battles, cannon, and conflagrations: there will be a variety of pleasures."

"Then I am determined."

"I have your word, then?"

"Yes, it is settled. I will thrust with the point, and strike with the edge—for Mazarin. But—"

"But what?"

"He will make me a baron?"

"Ah, by Jove, yes," said d'Artagnan, "that is agreed upon as a preliminary. I told you so, and I repeat it—I will answer for your barony."

On the faith of this promise, Porthos, who had never doubted his friend's word, returned with him to the chateau.

CHAPTER. XIV.

IN WHICH IT IS SHOWN, THAT ALTHOUGH PORTHOS WAS GREATLY DISSATISFIED WITH HIS LOT, MOUSQUETON WAS VERY WELL CONTENTED WITH HIS.

Even whilst returning to the chateau, and in the midst of Porthos's dreams about his barony, d'Artagnan was reflecting on poor human nature, always discontented with what it possesses, and ever desirous of obtaining what it has not. In Porthos's place, d'Artagnan would have considered himself the happiest man on earth. And for Porthos to be happy, he wanted—what? Five letters to place before all his names, and a small coronet, to be painted on the panels of his carriage.

"I might pass all my life," said d'Artagnan to himself, "in looking on every side, without being able to detect the face of a man who was completely happy."

He had just made this philosophical remark, when Providence seemed as if it wished to give him the lie. At the moment that Porthos quitted him to give some orders to his cook, he saw Mousqueton coming towards him. The countenance of the brave fellow, barring a slight shade of distress, which, like a summer cloud, rather veiled than covered his face, was the picture of happiness.

"There is what I was looking for," said d'Artagnan to himself: "but, alas! the poor fellow does not know why I am come."

Mousqueton kept aloof. But d'Artagnan seated himself on a bench, and beckoned him to approach.

"Sir," said Musqueton, taking advantage of this permission, "I have a favour to ask you."

"Speak, my friend," said d'Artagnan.

"I dare not, sir. I fear least you should think that prosperity has spoiled me."

"You are happy, then, my friend?" said d'Artagnan.

"As happy as it is possible to be; and yet you may make me happier still."

"Speak, then, and if it depends on me it is done."

"Oh, sir, it wholly depends on you."

"I am attentive."

"Sir, the favour I ask is, that you would no more call me Mousqueton, but Mouston. Since I have had the honour of being his excellency's steward, I have taken this last name, which is more noble, and makes me more respected by my inferiors. You know yourself, sir, how necessary subordination is amongst lacqueys."

D'Artagnan smiled. Porthos elongated his names; Mousqueton abbreviated his.

"Well, sir?" said Mousqueton, trembling with anxiety.

"Well, then, yes. My dear Mouston," continued d'Artagnan, make yourself perfectly easy. I will not forget thy request; and, if it will give thee any pleasure, I will not *thee* and *thou* thee any more."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mousqueton, colouring with pleasure, "if you would do me such an honour, sir, I shall be grateful all my life. But perhaps it would be too much to ask?"

"Alas!" said d'Artagnan to himself, "it is but very little, in exchange for the unexpected miseries which I bring upon this poor devil, who has received me so kindly."

"And will you remain long with us?" inquired Mousqueton, whose countenance, restored to complete serenity, expanded like a peony.

"I leave you to-morrow, my friend," answered d'Artagnan.

"Ah, sir," cried Mousqueton, you only came, then, to make us regret your visit."

"I fear so," said d'Artagnan, but in so low a tone that Mousqueton, who was just making his parting bow, could not hear him.

A species of remorse penetrated d'Artagnan's heart, indurated as it was. He did not regret engaging Porthos in a course where his life and fortune would be staked, for Porthos willingly hazarded all this for his baronial title, which he had for fifteen years been anxious to acquire. But Mousqueton, who desired nothing but to

be called Mouston, was it not very cruel to snatch him from his delicious life, from his granary of abundance? This idea completely absorbed his thoughts on the reappearance of Porthos.

"To dinner!" said Porthos.

"To dinner?" responded d'Artagnan. "Why, what o'clock is it?"

"My dear fellow, it is past one o'clock."

"Your abode is a perfect paradise, Porthos. It makes one forget time. I follow you; but I am not hungry."

"Come along. If one cannot always eat, at any rate he can always drink. That is one of the maxims of poor Athos, of which I have found out the correctness since I have become wearied of doing nothing."

D'Artagnan, whom his Gascon disposition had kept very temperate did not appear as much convinced of the truth of Athos's axiom as his friend; he did what he could, however, to keep himself upon an equality with his host.

Yet, whilst observing Porthos eating and drinking as much as he could, the recollection of Mousqueton would intrude on d'Artagnan's mind; and the more so, as Mousqueton, without actually attending upon them—for that would have been derogatory to his new dignity—was occasionally seen at the door, betraying his gratitude to d'Artagnan, by sending up wines of greater age and finer quality. Therefore, when, at the dessert, on a sign from d'Artagnan, Porthos had dismissed his servants, and the two friends found themselves alone—

"Porthos," said d'Artagnan, "who will acccompany you in your campaigns?"

"Why, Mouston, to be sure," answered Porthos, quite naturally.

This was a severe blow on d'Artagnan, who already, in imagination, saw the kindly smiles of the steward changed to melancholy grimaces.

"And, yet, my dear fellow," said d'Artagnan, "Mouston is no longer a youth. Besides, he is grown enormously fat, and has probably lost the power of active service."

"I know that," answered Porthos, "but I am accustomed to him;

and, besides, he would not like to leave me: he loves me too much for that."

"Oh, blind self-love!" thought d'Artagnan.

"Besides, you yourself," continued Porthos, "have you not still the same lacquey with you—that brave, and good, that intelligent —what do you call him?"

"Planchet—yes, I have found him again; but he is no longer a lacquey."

"What is he, then?"

"Why, with the sixteen thousand livres that he gained at the siege of la Rochelle by carrying that letter to Lord de Winter, he has opened a small shop in the rue des Lombards, and he is a pastry-cook."

"Ah, he is a pastry-cook in the rue des Lombards? But how is it that he is with you now?"

"He has played some pranks," answered d'Artagnan, "and is afraid of being called to an account for them."

"Well, then," continued Porthos, "had any one told you, my dear fellow, that one day Planchet would save Rochefort, and that you would conceal him for it?"

"I should not have believed him. But what would you have! Circumstances change individuals."

"Nothing more true," said Porthos. "But that which does not change, or, rather, that which changes for the better, is wine. Taste this: it is Spanish, of that quality which our friend Athos much esteemed—it is Xeres."

At this moment the steward entered to consult his master on the arrangements for the next day, and also respecting a proposed hunting-match.

"Tell me, Mouston," said Porthos, "are my arms in a good state?"

D'Artagnan began beating the time under the table to conceal his confusion.

"Your arms, your excellency?" said Mouston; "what arms?"

"Why, my armour, to be sure."

"What armour?"

"My war armour."

"Why, yes, your excellence—at least I think so."

"You will ascertain whether it be so to-morrow, and you will have it polished up should it be necessary. Which is my swiftest horse?"

"Vulcan."

"And which the most able to bear fatigue?"

"Bayard."

"And what horse do you prefer?"

"I prefer Rustaud, your excellency: he is a good beast, to whom I am thoroughly accustomed."

"He is strong, is he not?"

'Norman, crossed with Mecklenburg: he would go from morning till night.

"That will just do. You will refresh these three horses; you will furbish, or cause to be furbished up, my armour; and, moreover, pistols and coteau-de-chasse for yourself."

"We are going to travel then, your excellence?" said Mosqueton, begininng to be somewhat disturbed.

D'Artagnan, who had as yet only beat some wild chords, here beat a regular march.

"Better than that, Mouston," replied Porthos.

"We are going upon an expedition, I suppose, sir?" said the steward, whose roses were gradually fading into lilies.

"We are going to resume service, Mouston," replied Porthos, vainly endeavouring to make his moustache regain the martial curl that it had lost.

These words were scarcely uttered, before Mousqueton was seized with such a fit of trembling as actually shook his alabaster cheeks. He cast an indescribable glance of tender reproach at d'Artagnan, which that officer could not support without feeling himself much affected; then he staggered back, and, in a suffocating voice—

"Service!" cried he—"service in the king's armies?"

"Yes, and no. We are about to take the field again to seek for adventures, and, in short, to resume the life of olden times."

This last word fell like a thunderbolt on Mousqueton's ears. It

was those terrible times of old, which made the present so sweet.

"Oh, my God! what do I hear?" exclaimed Mousqueton, casting even a more supplicating glance than the former at d'Artagnan.

"What would you have, my poor Mouston?" demanded d'Artagnan. "Fate——"

In spite of the care that d'Artagnan had taken not to thee and thou him, and to give that brevity to his name which he aspired to, Mousqueton did not feel the blow the less severely; and it was so terrible that he left the room completely overcome, and forgot even to shut the door.

"That good Mouston! he could not contain himself for joy," said Porthos, in the exact tone we may fancy Don Quixote to have told Sancho to saddle his dapple for his last campaign.

The two friends, being now alone, began to talk of the future, and to build a thousand castles in the air. Mousqueton's excellent wine made them see a most brilliant perspective—to d'Artagnan, of double and single pistoles; and, to Porthos, the blue riband and a ducal coronet. The fact is, that they fell asleep over their wine, and did not awake until they were aroused to go to bed.

Nevertheless, the next day Mousqueton was a little comforted by d'Artagnan, who told him that the war would probably be at Paris, within reach of du Vallon, which was near Corbeil, or of de Bracieux, which was near Melun; or of Pierrefonds, which was between Compiegne and Villers-Cotterets.

"But I fancy that in old times——" said Mousqueton timidly.

"Oh," said d'Artagnan, "they do not now make war as they did in old times. To-day the affairs are all political. Ask Planchet about it."

Mousqueton went for information to his old friend, who confirmed all that d'Artagnan had said. "Only in this war," he added, "the prisoners have a chance of being hanged."

"Zounds!" cried Mousqueton, "I think I should even prefer the siege of la Rochelle."

As for Porthos, after having made his guest kill a roebuck, and after having led him from mountain to wood, and from the woods

to his fish-ponds—after having shown him his greyhounds, his mute, Gredinet, and all he possessed, and having given him three more splendid repasts, he asked him for his definite instructions before he left his chateau.

"Observe, my dear friend," said the ambassador; "I must have four days to go from hence to Blois, one to remain there, and three or four to return to Paris. Set off, therefore, in a week, with your equipage. You will go to the rue Triquetonne, the hotel de la Chevrette, and there await my return."

"That is settled," said Porthos.

"As for myself, I am going on what I consider a fruitless expedition to Athos. But, although I expect to find him become perfectly inefficient, some consideration must be paid to our friends."

"If I were to go with you," said Porthos, "it might amuse me."

"Possibly so," replied d'Artagnan, "and me also; but you would not then have time for your preparations."

"That is true," said Porthos. "Go, then, and with good courage. As for me, I am full of ardour."

"Capital!" said d'Artagnan.

And they separated on the boundaries of the Pierrefonds estate, to the extreme limits of which Porthos wished to conduct his friend.

"At least," said d'Artagnan, taking his way towards Villers-Cotterets—"at least I shall not be alone. That devil of a fellow, Porthos, is in magnificent vigour. If Athos should come, we shall be three, and may laugh at that little monkish lover, Aramis."

At Villers-Cotterets he wrote to the cardinal:—

"Your excellence—I have already one to offer your eminence, and he is worth twenty men. I am now on my way to Blois, the Comte de la Fère inhabiting the chateau de Bragelonne, near that town."

And upon this he took the road to Blois, gossiping with Planchet, which was a great diversion during their long journey.

CHAPTER XV.

TWO ANGELIC HEADS.

They had a long journey before them, but d'Artagnan did not distress himself about it. He knew that his horses had been invigorated at the abundant racks of the lord of de Bracieux. He therefore commenced the four or five days' journey with full confidence, followed by the faithful Planchet.

As we have before said, these two men, to break the tediousness of the way, journeyed side by side, and constantly chatted together. As d'Artagnan had gradually laid aside the master, so also had Planchet thrown off the guise of the servant. He was a cunning fellow, who, since his sudden elevation to citizenship, had often regretted the free living of other days, and the conversation and brilliant society of gentlemen; and who, perceiving that he was gifted with a certain species of personal valour, grieved to find himself gradually deteriorated by perpetual contact with men of low ideas.

He therefore soon raised himself to the rank of a confidant of him whom he still called his master. D'Artagnan had not opened his heart for many years. The consequence was, that these two men, on meeting again after such a long separation, suited each other admirably. Besides, Planchet was no vulgar companion in adventures. He was a man of considerable intelligence; without exactly seeking danger, he did not recoil at its approach, as d'Artagnan had two or three times experienced; and, lastly, he had been a soldier, and arms dignify any one. Moreover, if Planchet required his assistance, most assuredly he would find Planchet's very useful to himself. It was therefore almost in the character of friends that they reached the Blaisois.

Whilst on the road, d'Artagnan said, shaking his head, and returning to the idea which constantly beset him—"I know full well that this expedition to Athos is perfectly useless and absurd; but I owe this respect to an old friend—one who had stuff in him for the composition of the most generous and most noble gentleman in the whole world."

"Oh! M. Athos was a high-spirited and haughty gentleman," said Planchet.

"Was he not?" ejaculated d'Artagnan.

"Scattering money as the sky scatters hail," continued Planchet, "and handling his sword with the air of a king. Do you remember, sir, the duel with the Englishmen in the enclosure des Carmes?—Ah, how handsome and dignified was M. Athos that day, when he said to his adversary—'You obliged me to tell you my name, sir. so much the worse for you, for I shall be forced to kill you.'—I was near, and heard him say it. That is word for word what he said. And the glance, when he despatched his adversary, as he had declared he would, and who fell without uttering one word! Ah, sir, I repeat that he was a proud gentleman."

"Yes," said d'Artagnan, "this is all true as the gospel; but he will have lost all these fine qualities by one defect."

"I remember," said Planchet, "he loved to drink; or, rather, he drank. But he did not drink like other men. His eyes said nothing when he carried the glass to his lips. Truly, silence was never so eloquent. As for me, I fancy that I hear him murmuring, 'Enter wine, to drive away care.' And how he broke the foot of a glass, or the neck of a bottle! No one could do it like him."

"Well, and now," continued d'Artagnan, "mark the sad spectacle that awaits us. That noble gentleman, with such a proud look—that handsome cavalier, so brilliant in arms, that the only wonder was to see him carrying a simple sword, and not the baton of a field-marshal—well, he will be transformed into a crooked old man, with a red nose, and bleary eyes. We shall find him stretched on the turf, whence he will regard us with dull eyes, which probably will not be able to recognise our countenances. God is my witness, Planchet," continued d'Artagnan, "that I would avoid this melancholy spectacle, if I were not determined to pay this respect to the shade of the illustrious Comte de de la Fère, whom we loved so dearly."

Planchet shook his head without saying a word. It was evident that he shared his master's fears.

"And then," continued d'Artagnan," that decrepitude — for

Athos is getting old now—and perhaps distress, for he will have neglected the little property he possessed, and that dirty Grimaud, more dumb than ever, and even more drunken than his master. You see, Planchet, all this grieves my heart."

"I fancy that I am there, and that I see him yawning and tottering," said Planchet, in a piteous voice.

"My only fear, I confess," continued d'Artagnan, "is, that, in a fit of drunken military ardour, he may accept my proposals, which would be a great misfortune, and a real embarrassment to me and Porthos; but in the midst of his next debauch, we will quit him, and, on recovering his senses, he would understand the reason."

"At any rate, sir," said Planchet, "we shall soon be enlightened on the subject, for I fancy that those lofty walls which are now tinted by the setting sun, are the walls of Blois."

"Probably so," said d'Artagnan, "and those sharp and sculptured turrets, of which we just catch a glimpse in the wood to the left, resemble what I have heard of Chambord."

"Shall we enter the town?" inquired Planchet.

"Certainly, to gain some information."

"I advise you, sir, if we enter it, to taste certain little pots of cream, of which I have heard a great deal; but which, unfortunately, cannot be carried to Paris, and must be eaten on the spot."

"Well, we will eat some of them, you may depend upon it," said d'Artagnan.

At this moment one of those heavy wagons, drawn by oxen, which carry wood, cut in the beautiful forests of the country, to the ports of the Loire, came out of a road, full of ruts, into that which the two horsemen followed. A man accompanied it, carrying a long pole, armed with a nail, with which he goaded his sluggish team.

"Halloo, my friend," cried Planchet to the ox driver.

"What would you please to want, gentlemen?" inquired the peasant, with the purity of language peculiar to the people of that country, and which might shame the fastidious linguists of the place de la Sorbonne, or the rue de l'Université.

"We are seeking the house of M. le Comte de la Fère," said d'Artagnan: "do you know that name among the nobles of your neighbourhood?"

The peasant took off his hat on hearing the name, and replied—"Gentlemen, this wood which I am carrying belongs to him. I have cut it in his forest, and am taking it to the chatean."

D'Artagnan did not wish to interrogate this man. It was repugnant to his feelings to hear from another what he had himself said to Planchet.

"The *chateau!*" said he to himself. "The *chateau!* Ah! I understand. Athos is not very patient: so, like Porthos, he has compelled his peasants to call him your excellency, and to term his paltry house a chateau. He had a heavy hand, that dear Athos, especially in his cups."

The oxen made but slow progress; and as d'Artagnan and Planchet followed the wagon, the pace annoyed them.

"Is this the road?" inquired d'Artagnan, "and may we follow it without danger of mistaking the way?"

"Oh, yes, certainly, sir," replied the man; "and you can proceed without following these sluggish beasts. You have but half a league to go, and you will perceive a chateau on your right: you cannot yet see it, on account of a screen of poplars which conceals it. That chateau is not Bragelonne—it is la Vallière. You must go beyond it; but, at the distance of three musket-shots further on, you will perceive a large white house, with a slated roof, built on an eminence, and shaded by enormous sycamores: that is the chatean of M. le Comte de la Fère."

"And is this half league very long? For there is league upon league in our fine country of France."

"Ten minutes will suffice, sir, for the slender legs of your horse."

D'Artagnan thanked the man, and immediately pushed forward. Then, in spite of all he could do, agitated by the idea of again seeing the singular man he had so dearly loved, and who, both by his example and precepts, had so greatly contributed to his education as a gentleman, he gradually slackened his horse's pace, and went on, with his head depressed, in deep meditation.

Planchet also had found matter for grave reflection in the meeting with, and the manner of the peasant. Never in Normandy, nor in Franche-Comte, nor in Artois, nor in Picardy, countries which he had inhabited, had he met among the villagers that easy gait, that polished air, that pure language. He was tempted to believe that he had fallen in with some gentleman frondeur like himself, who, from political motives, had, as he had done, been obliged to assume some disguise.

Shortly, at a turn of the road, the chateau de la Vallière, as the ox driver had said, offered itself to the travellers' view; and then, a quarter of a league further on, the white house, embosomed in sycamores, was seen at the extremity of a thick group of trees, which the spring had powdered with flowers as thick as snow-flakes.

On seeing this, d'Artagnan, who was not gifted with very sensitive feelings in general, felt an unusual emotion penetrate his heart; so powerful are the recollections of our youth during the whole course of life. Planchet, who had not the same cause for emotion, astonished at seeing his master's agitation, looked alternately at d'Artagnan and at the house.

The musketeer went some steps further, and found himself opposite a grating, worked with that taste which distinguished the brass works of the period. Through this grating, a well-tended garden could be seen; also a spacious court, in which many led horses were pawing, being held by several servants in different liveries; and there was, likewise, a carriage, drawn by two horses of the country.

"We are either mistaken, or that man has deceived us," said d'Artagnan. "Athos cannot live here. My God! perhaps he is dead, and this property belongs to some one of the same name! Dismount, Planchet, and go and inquire. As for me, I confess I have not the courage to do it."

Planchet dismounted.

"You will add," continued d'Artagnan, "that a gentleman who was passing wishes to have the honour of paying his respects to M. le Comte de la Fère; and, should you be satisfied with the information you receive, well, then, you may give my name."

Planchet, leading his horse by the bridle, approached the gate, and rang the bell; and immediately a servant, with gray hair, but still upright in spite of his age, came forward, and received him.

"Does M. le Comte de la Fère live here," demanded Planchet.

"Yes, sir," replied the servant, for Planchet did not wear any livery.

"A nobleman, who has left the service, is he not?"

"Yes, the same."

"And who had a lacquey named Grimaud," continued Planchet, who, with his habitual prudence, did not think he could environ himself with too much information.

"M. Grimaud is at present absent from the chateau," said the servant, beginning to examine Planchet from top to toe, like one little accustomed to such interrogations.

"Then," exclaimed Planchet, quite radiant with joy, "I perceive that it is really the same M. le Comte de la Fère whom we are seeking. Will you open the gate, for I wish to announce to M. le Comte that my master, one of his friends, is here, and wishes to pay his respects to him."

"And why did you not say so before?" said the servant, opening the gate. "But where is your master?"

"Behind me—he is following."

The servant opened the gate, and preceded Planchet, who made a sign to d'Artagnan, who, his heart beating more violently than ever, entered the court on horseback.

When Planchet was on the steps, he heard a voice issuing from one of the lower rooms, and saying:

"Well, where is this gentleman, and why do you not conduct him here?"

This voice, which even reached d'Artagnan, awoke in his heart a thousand emotions, a thousand recollections which he had forgotten. He threw himself hastily from his horse, whilst Planchet, with a smile on his lips, advanced towards the master of the house.

"I know that lad," said Athos, making his appearance on the hreshold.

"Yes M. le Comte, you know me, and I know you well enough. I am Planchet, M. le Comte—Planchet, you know—"

And here the honest fellow could not say a word more, so completely had the unexpected appearance of the gentleman astounded him.

"What, Planchet!" exclaimed Athos; "is M. d'Artagnan here then?"

"I am, my friend; here I am, dear Athos!" cried d'Artagnan, stammering, and almost staggering.

At these words a very perceptible emotion passed across the handsome face and calm features of Athos. He made two rapid steps towards d'Artagnan, without taking his eyes off him one instant, and tenderly pressed him in his arms. d'Artagnan, on his part, somewhat recovered from his agitation, embraced him with a cordiality which shone in his tearful eyes.

Athos then took him by the hand, which he pressed between his own, and led him into a saloon, where many persons were assembled. Every one arose. "I present to you," said Athos, "M. le Chevalier d'Artagnan, lieutenant of his Majesty's musketeers, the most devoted friend, and one of the bravest and most amiable men I ever knew."

D'Artagnan, according to the custom, received the compliments of the company, to which he responded in the best manner he could; and whilst the conversation, interrupted for a moment, again became general, he began to examine Athos.

It was a most extraordinary circumstance that Athos had scarcely aged at all. His beautiful eyes, freed from that circle of dark brown which denotes midnight debauches, appeared to be larger, and of a purer liquid than ever. His countenance, slightly elongated, had gained in dignity what it had lost in febrile excitement. His hand, always wonderfully handsome and nervous, in spite of the softness of the skin, shone from under a laced ruffle like the hands of Titian and Vandyk. He was rather more slender than formerly; his well-made and large shoulders announced unusual strength; his long dark hair, slightly sprinkled with gray, fell gracefully on his shoulders, waving with a natural bend; his voice was as fresh and as clear as if he had been only twenty-five years old; and his

splendid teeth, which were white and perfect, gave an inexpressible charm to his smile

But his guests, who perceived by the imperceptible dulness of the conversation, that the friends were burning with the desire of being alone, began, with the skill and politeness peculiar to the times, to prepare for their departure—that momentous affair in the great world, when there was a great world. But a tremendous noise of dogs barking resounded in the court, and the voices of many persons were heard, crying out, "Ah! Raoul is come back."

Athos, at this word Raoul, looked at d'Artagnan, and seemed to perceive the curiosity which this name must excite. But d'Artagnan as yet comprehended nothing: he had not recovered from his astonishment. He therefore turned himself almost mechanically, when a handsome youth, about fifteen years old, simply but most tastefully dressed, entered the saloon, gracefully raising his hat, adorned with long scarlet plumes.

And yet this person, unexpected as he was, much struck him. A world of new ideas invaded his mind, explaining to him, through every avenue of his fine intellect, the alteration in Athos, which had hitherto appeared quite inexplicable. A singular resemblance between the gentleman and the boy, explained the mystery of this reformed life. He remained quiet, observing and listening.

"So, you are returned, Raoul," said the count.

"Yes, sir," replied the young man respectfully, "and I have executed the commission which you gave me."

"But what is the matter with you, Raoul?" said Athos, somewhat anxiously; "you are pale, and appear agitated."

"It is because a misfortune has happened to our little neighbour, sir," replied the young man.

"To Mademoiselle de la Vallière?" said Athos, with some vivacity.

"What is it?" demanded many of the gentleman present.

"She was walking with her nurse Madeline, in the enclosures where the woodcutters were trimming their trees, when, as I rode past, I saw her, and stopped. When she saw me, she jumped off a lofty pile of fagots, on which she had climbed, her foot turned

under her, she fell, and was not able to rise again. I fear that she has sprained her ankle."

"Oh, my God! and has Madame de St. Remy, her mother, been informed of it?"

"No, sir, Madame de St. Remy is at Blois, in attendance on the Duchess of Orleans. I feared that she might be treated unskilfully, and hastened here to ask your advice."

"Send quickly to Blois; or, rather, do you take your horse, Raoul, and go yourself."

Raoul bowed.

"But where is Louise?" inquired the count.

"I have had her brought here, sir, and have left her with Charlot's wife, who, in the meantime, has put her foot into cold water."

After this explanation, which had given an opportunity, for every one to rise, Athos's guests took their leave. The old Duke de Barbé alone, in virtue of a twenty years' friendship with the family of La Vallière, went to see the little Louise, who was crying, and who, when she saw Raoul, dried her beautiful eyes, and smiled. Then he proposed to carry the little Louise with him to Blois in his carriage.

"You are right, sir," said Athos, "she will be sooner with her mother. As for you, Raoul, I am sure that you have been giddy, and that it was your fault."

"Oh, no, no, sir, I assure you not," said the young girl; whilst the youth grew pale at the thought of his having been the cause of the accident.

"Oh, sir, I assure you—" murmured Raoul.

"You shall, nevertheless, go to Blois," said the count kindly, "and you will make our excuses to Madame de St. Remy, and then return."

The colour again appeared on the young man's cheek. After having consulted the count's eyes, he took the young girl up in his arms, whose pretty face, smiling in the midst of her pain, rested on his shoulder, placed her in the carriage, and then vaulted on his horse with the grace and agility of an accomplished squire. After

having bowed to Athos and d'Artagnan, he went off rapidly, putting himself close to the door of the carriage, and keeping his eyes constantly fixed on its interior.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CHATEAU OF BRAGELONNE.

D'Artagnan had remained during all this scene with his eyes wide open, and his mouth almost gaping with wonder. He had found everything so completely different from his expectations, that he was almost stupid with astonishment.

Athos took his arm, and led him into the garden. "Whilst supper is preparing," said he, smiling, "you will not be sorry, my friend, to clear up a little of this mystery, which makes you so thoughtful."

"That is true, count," replied d'Artagnan, who already began to feel the influence of that vast aristocratical superiority which Athos always had over him.

Athos looked at him with a soft smile. "But first, my dear d'Artagnan," said he, "there is no count here. If I called you chevalier, it was to introduce you to my guests, and that they might know who you were. But to you, d'Artagnan, I hope that I am always Athos, your comrade and friend. Do you prefer ceremony, because you love me less?"

"Oh, God forbid!" said the Gascon, with one of those honest youthful ebullitions which seldom survive to mature age.

"Then let us return to our old habits; and, to begin, let us be frank. Everything astonishes you here, does it not?"

"Most profoundly."

"But what astonishes you most," continued Athos, smiling, "is myself? Confess it."

"I do confess it."

"I am yet young, am I not, in spite of my forty-nine years? I am yet recognisable?"

"On the contrary," said d'Artagnan, who was about to carry Athos's recommendation of frankness further than he had intended, "you are not so at all."

"Ah!" I understand, said Athos, colouring slightly: "everything has it's end, d'Artagnan—folly and all."

"And then there has been a change in your fortune, it seems. You have a capital house, which belongs to you, I presume?"

"Yes; it is the small property, my friend, which, you know, I told you I inherited, when I quitted the service."

"You have a park, horses, and equipages."

Athos smiled. "The park has twenty acres, my dear friend, including the kitchen-garden; my horses amount to two, besides the crop-eared bobtail for my lacquey; my equipages consist of four hounds for the woods, two greyhounds, and a pointer; and all this luxury of a pack," added Athos, smiling, "is not for myself."

"Yes, I comprehend," said d'Artagnan;" it is for the young man—for Raoul." And d'Artagnan looked at Athos with an involuntary smile.

"You have guessed it, my friend," said Athos.

"And this young man is your companion, your godson perhaps, your relation: ah! how you are changed, my dear Athos!"

"This young man," said Athos, calmly, "this young man, d'Artagnan, is an orphan, whom his mother abandoned at the house of a poor curate in the country. I have brought him up, and educated him."

"He must be very much attached to you?"

"I believe that he loves me as if I were his father."

"He must be very grateful."

"Oh! as to gratitude, it is reciprocal. I owe him as much as he owes me. I do not say so to him, but I tell you so, d'Artagnan—the obligation is on my side."

"How can that be?" inquired the astonished musketeer.

"Oh, my God, yes; he it is who has caused the change you see.

in me. I was withering like a solitary and blighted tree. Nothing but a most profound and deep affection could again unite my heart to the affairs of this life. A mistress?—I was too old. Friends?—I possessed you no longer. Well, this boy restored to me all that I had lost. I had no longer courage to live for myself: I have therefore lived for him. Precepts do a great deal for a child, but example does much more. I have given him an example, d'Artagnan. The vices which I had, I corrected; the virtues which I possessed not, I have pretended to possess. Therefore, I do not think that I deceive myself, when I say, that Raoul is destined to become as perfect a gentleman as this poor age of our's can produce."

D'Artagnan looked at Athos with increasing admiration. They were walking under a green and shady alley, through which some straggling rays of the setting sun found their way. One of these golden beams illumined the countenance of Athos, and his eyes appeared to throw back the warm and gentle glow which they received.

The thought of Lady de Winter suddenly crossed the mind of d'Artagnan. "And you are happy?" said he to his friend.

The quick eye of Athos penetrated even to the bottom of d'Artagnan's heart, and seemed to read all his thoughts. "As happy as it is permitted to any of God's creatures to be, here on earth. But finish your idea, d'Artagnan, for you have not told it all to me."

"You are an awful creature, Athos," said d'Artagnan: "it is impossible to conceal anything from you. Well, then, I wished to ask you, whether you have not occasionally some sudden emotions of terror, which resemble——"

"Feelings of remorse?" continued Athos. "I finish your sentence for you, my friend. Yes, and no. I feel no remorse, because I believe that that woman deserved her fate. I feel no remorse, because, had we allowed her to live, she would have infallibly continued her destructive course. But this does not prove my conviction that we were entirely justified in what we did. Perhaps all blood requires expiation. She has expiated what she shed; and it may be that we have yet to expiate that shed by us."

"I have sometimes had the same thoughts," said d'Artagnan.

"That woman had a son, had she not?" said Athos.

"Yes,"

"Have you ever heard anything of him?"

"Never."

"He must be three-and-twenty years old," murmured Athos. "I often think of that young man, d'Artagnan."

"It is singular; and I had entirely forgotten him."

Athos gave a melancholy smile. "And have you ever heard anything of Lord de Winter?"

"I know that he was in high favour with Charles I."

"He must have shared his fortune, which, at present, is very bad. Observe, d'Artagnan, that makes good what I said just now: he allowed Strafford's blood to be shed, and blood demands blood. And the queen?"

"Which queen?"

"Madame Henriette of England, the daughter of Henry IV.

"She is at the Louvre, you know."

"Yes; where she is in utter destitution, is she not? During the severe cold of last winter, whilst her daughter was ill, she was obliged to remain in bed for want of firing, as I have been told. Do you understand that?" said Athos, shrugging his shoulders: "the daughter of Henry IV. shivering for want of a fagot! Why did she not come to ask assistance from the first of us she met, instead of from Mazarin! She would then have wanted nothing."

"Do you know her then, Athos?"

"No; but my mother saw her when she was a child. Did I never tell you that my mother was lady of honour to Marie de Medicis?"

"Never; you did not talk of such things as those, Athos."

"Ah, true," replied Athos; "but no opportunity arose for that species of conversation."

"Porthos was not so reserved," said d'Artagnan, with a smile.

"Every one has his own peculiar disposition, my dear d'Artagnan; and Porthos has some excellent qualities, in spite of the small

taintof vanity with which they are imbued: have you seen him lately?"

"I only left him five days ago," replied d'Artagnan. And then, with his strong Gascon humour, he gave an account of all the splendours of Porthos's chateau de Pierrefonds; and, whilst ridiculing his friend's foibles, did not fail to cast some sly reflections on the address of the worthy Master Mouston.

"I often wonder," said Athos, smiling at that gaiety which recalled the bright days of old, that we all, by chance, formed a society of men, who are yet so completely united after a separation of twenty years. Friendship strikes its roots deep into the heart of man. Dastards only deny its power, because they are incapable of feeling it. And Aramis?"

"I have seen him also; but he appeared cold."

"Ah! you have seen Aramis?" ejaculated Athos, looking at d'Artagnan with his penetrating eyes. "Truly, it is a real pilgrimage to the temple of friendship that you are making, as the poets say."

D'Artagnan was somewhat embarrassed.

"You know," continued Athos, "that Aramis is naturally somewhat cold. Besides, he is always entangled in some female intrigue."

"I fancy that he is so at present, and in one of a very complicated nature," replied d'Artagnan.

Athos did not answer.

"He is not at all curious," said d'Artagnan to himself.

Athos not only did not answer, but he changed the conversation.

"You see," said he, pointing out the house, to which they had almost returned, after about an hour's walk, "we have made the tour of all my domain."

"Everything is so charming, and, above all, so gentlemanly," replied d'Artagnan.

At this moment the sound of a horse's feet was heard.

"It is Raoul who is returned," said Athos: "we shall hear some news of the poor little girl."

In fact, the young man then appeared at the barred gate, and entered the court-yard covered with dust. Then jumping from his horse, he gave the bridle to a sort of groom, and came forward to salute the count and d'Artagnan with respectful politeness.

"This gentleman," said Athos, laying his hand on d'Artagnan's shoulder—"this gentleman is the Chevalier d'Artagnan, whom you have so often heard me mention, Raoul."

"Sir," said the young man, bowing again and more profoundly, "the count has often pronounced your name, and has cited it whenever he wished to bring forward the example of an intrepid and noble gentleman."

This little compliment did not fail to touch d'Artagnan. He stretched forth his hand to Raoul, saying—"My young friend, all the praises bestowed on me ought to revert to the count, who entirely educated me, and it is not his fault if his scholar does not profit by his instructions. But he will succeed with you, I am sure, Raoul. I admire your appearance, and your kind politeness has given me great pleasure."

Athos was more delighted than he could express. He looked gratefully at d'Artagnan; and then gave Raoul one of those singular smiles which children are so proud of receiving.

"Now," thought d'Artagnan, whom this mute expression of countenance had not escaped, "I am quite certain of it."

"Well," said Athos, "I hope that the accident has had no serious consequences?"

"They cannot yet tell, sir. The surgeon can form no decision as yet, on account of the swelling: he fears, however, that some tendon may be injured."

"And why did not you remain longer with Madame de St. Remy?"

"I feared that I should not be back in time for your supper, sir," said Raoul, "and that I might keep you waiting."

At this moment a little boy, half peasant, half lacquey, came to announce supper.

Athos conducted his guest into a dining-room, very plainly and simply furnished; but the windows of which looked, on one side,

towards the garden, on the other, on a conservatory filled with magnificent flowers.

D'Artagnan looked at the service. The plate was splendid: it was evidently the ancient family plate. On a sideboard was a superb silver ewer, which d'Artagnan stopped to examine.

Ah! this is divinely executed," said he.

Yes," replied Athos, " it is one of the master-pieces of that great Florentine artist, Benvenuto Cellini."

" And what battle does it represent?"

" That of Marignan. It is at the moment when one of my ancestors gave his sword to Francis I., who had just broken his own. It was on this occasion that Enguerrand de la Fére, my grandfather, was made a knight of St. Michel. Besides that, the king, fifteen years later—for he had not forgotten that he had fought three hours longer with Enguerrand's sword, without its breaking—made him a present of this ewer, and of a sword which probably you saw formerly in my room, and which is also a very handsome piece of workmanship. Those were the days of giants," said Athos. " We are but pigmies by the side of such men. But let us sit down and sup, d'Artagnan. By the by," said Athos to the little servant, who was serving the soup, " call Charlot."

The boy left the room, and, a moment after, the servant who had come to the gate on their arrival, entered.

" My dear Charlot," said Athos, " I particularly recommend to your care, during his continuance here, Planchet, M. d'Artagnan's valet. He likes good wine, and you have the keys of the cellar. He has often laid hard, and cannot have any objection to a good bed: so look to that also, I beseech you."

Charlot bowed, and left the room.

" Charlot is also a fine fellow," said Athos; " he has lived with me eighteen years."

" You think of everything," said d'Artagnan, " and I thank you for Planchet, my dear Athos."

The youth opened his eyes with astonishment at this name, and seemed to doubt, whether it was really the count whom d'Artagnan addressed.

"That name appeared strange to you, did it not, Raoul?" said Athos, smiling. "It was my military appellation, when M. d'Artagnan, two brave friends, and myself, performed our exploits at la Rochelle, under the late cardinal, and M. de Bassompierre, who is since dead. This gentleman deigns to retain for me this friendly appellation, and every time I hear it my heart warms with emotion."

"That name was once very celebrated," said d'Artagnan, "and one day received the honours of a triumph."

"What do you mean, sir?" demanded Raoul, with youthful curiosity.

"Faith, I know nothing about it," said Athos.

"Have you forgotten the bastion of St. Gervais, Athos, and the napkin which was turned into a flag by three musket-balls? I have a better memory than you have, and will tell you all about it, young man." And he recounted to Raoul all the history of the bastion, as Athos had related to him that of his grandfather.

At this recital the youth fancied he saw before him one of those feats of arms, depicted by Tasso and Ariosto, which belong to the romantic ages of chivalry.

"But what you do not tell him, d'Artagnan," said Athos, "is, that you were one of the best swordsmen of your time. Hand of iron, wrist of steel, aim certain, and eye of fire—that is what your adversary had to contend with. He was eighteen years of age—three years more than yourself, Raoul—when I first saw him engaged, and against tried men."

"And was M. d'Artagnan the conqueror?" inquired the young man, whose eyes shone bright during this conversation, and appeared to implore some particulars.

"I disabled one, I believe," replied d'Artagnan, stopping Athos by a glance. "As for the other, I think I disarmed him."

"Ah! you were a rough opponent," said Athos.

"And I have not lost a great deal of my skill," replied d'Artagnan, with his little Gascon laugh of self-satisfaction; "and a little while ago——"

A look from Athos stopped his mouth.

"I wish you to learn, Raoul," said Athos—"you who fancy

yourself so skilful, and whose vanity might some day receive a most severe lesson—I wish you to learn how dangerous the man is who unites coolness to activity; for I could never give you a more striking example. Request M. d'Artagnan to give you a lesson to-morrow, if he be not too much fatigued."

"Why, my dear Athos, you are yourself an excellent master, more particularly as to those qualifications which you extol in me. This very day, Planchet was speaking to me of that famous duel, with Lord de Winter and his companions, in the enclosure of des Carmes. Ah! young man," continued d'Artagnan, "there is here one whom I often called the best swordsman in the world."

"Oh, I must have spoiled my hand with this boy," said Athos.

"There are some hands which never spoil, my dear Athos, but which spoil others."

The young man would willingly have prolonged this conversation the whole night; but Athos observed that their guest must be fatigued, and in need of repose. D'Artagnan would have politely excused himself; but Athos insisted upon his taking possession of his chamber. Raoul conducted him to it; and as Athos fancied that he would remain there as long as he could, to make him tell him all the exploits of their youth, he went for him himself a short time after, and finished this delightful evening by a friendly squeeze of the hand, and a good-night to the musketeer.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE POLITICS OF ATHOS.

D'Artagnan went to bed, not so much for the sake of sleeping, as to be alone, and to think on all that he had seen and heard this evening. As he had an excellent disposition, and had from the first experienced a kind of instinctive inclination for Athos, which had

terminated in a sincere friendship, he was quite delighted at finding a man replete with intellect and vigour, instead of the brutalized drunkard, whom he had expected to see, dozing himself sober over a dunghill. He also submitted, without much effort, to the resumption of that superiority which Athos had always had over him; and, instead of feeling any jealousy on account of it, which a less generous disposition might have done, he felt a sincere joy, which was an omen to him of a favourable termination of his important negotiation.

And yet he thought that Athos was not not quite frank and open or all points. Who was this young man, whom he said he had adopted, and who so much resembled him? What did that return to the ways of the world, that overstrained sobriety, mean, which he had observed at table? One circumstance, although insignificant in itself, namely, the absence of Grimaud—from whom Athos could not separate himself in former times, and whose name had not even been mentioned, in spite of the numerous hints from d'Artagnan—much disquieted him. He therefore no longer possessed his friend's entire confidence; or, rather, Athos was connected to some invisible chain, or had been cautioned beforehand against the visit he paid him. He could not help thinking of Rochefort, and of what he said in the church of Notre-Dame. Had Rochefort been here before him?"

D'Artagnan had no time to lose in long reflections. Therefore, he determined to come to an explanation the next day. The small fortune he possessed, so skilfully concealed by Athos, announced the desire of appearance, and betrayed a remnant of ambition which might be easily rekindled. The vigour of intellect, and clearness of ideas, so perceptible in Athos, made him a man more easy to be roused than most others; and he would enter into the plans of the minister with the greater ardour, from his natural activity being doubled by the spur of necessity.

These thoughts kept d'Artagnan awake, in spite of his fatigue. He arranged his plans of attack; and although he knew that Athos was a formidable opponent, he determined to commence action after breakfast the next morning.

"And yet," he said to himself, "it is necessary to proceed with great caution, and it may be better to examine for some days Athos's connexions, to gain some information as to his new habits of life, to endeavour to draw from the simple youth, either whilst fencing or hunting with him, some intermediate intelligence, so as to connect the Athos of former times, with the Athos of the present time; and this must be easy, for the scholar must have imbibed something of the character of his preceptor." But d'Artagnan, who was a most acute Gascon, saw at once what advantages he would give against himself, were he, by any indiscretion or want of skill, to expose his manœuvres to Athos', practised eye.

And then—must we confess it?—however willing he was to use stratagem against the cunning of Aramis, and the vanity of Porthos, d'Artagnan was ashamed to shuffle with Athos, the frank and honourable gentleman. It seemed to him, that in acknowledging his superiority in finesse, Porthos and Aramis would think more highly of him; but that Athos, on the contrary, would esteem him less.

"Ah! why is not Grimaud, the silent Grimaud, here?" said d'Artagnan: "there are many things which I should have understood in his silence. Grimaud had such an eloquent silence."

At last, all noises ceased in the house. d'Artagnan had heard the doors and shutters closed. After having answered each other in the country, the dogs in turn were quiet. Then a nightingale, buried in a thick mass of shrubs, had for some time sung its melodious notes, and at length slept. There was no other noise in the chateau than the measured and monotonous tread of some one walking, underneath his chamber. He imagined that it was the apartment of Athos.

"He is walking and meditating," thought d'Artagnan; "but on what? It is impossible to tell. One might guess much—but not that."

At last Athos no doubt went to bed, for this noise also ceased. The silence and fatigue overcame d'Artagnan, and he slept.

D'Artagnan was no sluggard. Scarcely had the first dawn of day gilded his shutters, before he leaped from his bed, and opened his windows. He thought he saw some one in the court, who ap-

peared to wish to avoid being seen or heard. According to his usual custom, of observing everything which took place around him, d'Artagnan watched, without making the slightest noise, and recognised the scarlet coat and brown hair of Raoul.

The young man opened the stable door, and led forth the same bay horse which he rode the evening before, saddled and bridled it himself, as quickly and skillfuly as a professed groom, then led the animal down the right path of the kitchen garden, opened a side door, led his horse out, and shut the door after him: and then, over the top of the wall, d'Artagnan perceived him pass like an arrow under the flowing branches of the maples and acacias. D'Artagnan had remarked, the evening before, that the road led to Blois.

"Aha!" said the Gascon, "there is a young rogue, who already plays his pranks, and who does not appear to share Athos's hatred towards the fair sex. He is not gone out hunting, for he has neither dogs nor arms; he is not gone on a commission, for he seeks concealment. From whom does he conceal himself? Is it from me or his father?—for I am quite certain that the count is his father. As for that, however, I will know it; for I will ask Athos plainly whether it is so."

The daylight increased. All those noises which d'Artagnan heard cease successively the night before, he now heard successively renewed—the bird in the shrubs, the dog in the stable, the sheep in the pastures; whilst the boats moored on the Loire seemed to revive, detaching themselves from the banks, and letting themselves float down the current of the stream. D'Artagnan therefore remained at his window, that he might not awake any one. Then, when he heard the doors and shutters opened, he gave a last bend to his hair and a last turn to his moustache, brushed from habit the rim of his hat with the sleeve of his doublet, and went down stairs. He had hardly left the house before he perceived Athos, stooping down to the earth, in the attitude of a man who is looking for a crown in the sand.

"Good morning, my dear host," cried d'Artagnan.

"Good morning, my dear friend. Have you passed a good night?"

"Excellent, Athos—like your bed, your supper, and your kind reception. But what are you looking at so earnestly? Are you become an admirer of tulips, God wot!"

"My dear friend, you need not laugh at me, if I were. In the country, tastes greatly change; and, without knowing it, one imperceptibly loves all those beautiful things which the providence or God causes to spring from the earth, and which are looked upon with contempt in towns. In simple truth, I was looking at the irises which I had placed near this reservoir, and which have been crushed this morning. These gardeners are the most awkward creatures in the world. In leading a horse to water, they have let him tread upon the flower-bed."

D'Artagnan began to smile. "Ah," said he "do you, think so?" And he led his friend along the path, where a great number of similar steps were perceptible. "Here are some more, Athos," said he, in a careless manner.

"Yes, so there are, and quite fresh. Who can have gone out here this morning? A horse must have got out of the stable."

"It is not probable," said d'Artagnan, "for the steps are equal and regular."

"Where is Raoul?" cried Athos, "and why have I not seen him this morning?'

"Chut!" said d'Artagnan, putting his finger on his lips with a smile.

"What do you mean?" inquired Athos.

D'Artagnan related what he had seen, at the same time scrutinizing his host's countenance.

"Ah! I understand all now," said Athos, slightly shrugging his shoulders. "The poor boy is gone to Blois."

"And for what?"

"To gain some intelligence concerning the poor little La Valliere —the child, you know, who hurt her foot yesterday."

"Do you think so?" said d'Artagnan, as if incredulous.

"Not only do I think so, but I am quite certain," replied Athos. "Did you not observe that Raoul was in love?

"And with whom?—with that child of seven years old?"

"My dear fellow, at Raoul's age the heart is so full that it is absolutely necessary to diffuse it upon something, whether it be a dream or reality. Well, his love is half one, half the other!"

"You are jesting. What! this little girl?"

"But did you not observe that she is the prettiest little creature in the world, with her golden hair, and her large, languishing blue eyes."

"Yet what do you say to this love?"

"I say nothing: I laugh, and joke with Raoul. But these first cravings of the heart are so imperious, these first expansions of the feelings are at the same time so sweet and so bitter, that they often appear to have the character of a real passion. As for me, I remember that, at Raoul's age, I fell in love with a Greek statue, which good King Henry IV. gave to my father; and that I thought I should have gone mad when I was told that the history of Pygmalion was only a fable."

"It is sheer idleness. You do not occupy Raoul sufficiently; and he seeks to dissipate his mind."

"That is exactly the case: therefore I am thinking of removing him from this place."

"And you will do well."

"I know that: but it will almost break his heart, and he will suffer as much as from a real passion. For three or four years, even when he was himself quite a child, he has been amusing himself with embellishing and admiring this little idol, which he will finish one day by adoring, should he remain here. These children dream all day together, and talk of a thousand serious things, as if they were lovers of twenty years old. In short, these things have for some time amused the little La Vallière's parents; but I fancy that they now begin to frown at it."

"Utter childishness! But Raoul requires something to distract his attention. Remove him from this place, or you will never make a man of him."

"I think," said Athos, "that I shall send him to Paris very shortly."

"Ah!" said d'Artagnan, who recollected that hostilities were

about to commence. "If you wish, we can launch this young man into the world," said he.

"Ah!" said Athos, in his turn.

"I wish, at the same time, to consult you on something which has suggested itself to my mind."

"Do so."

"Do you not think that the time is come to take service?"

"Are you not in the service, d'Artagnan?"

"But I mean active service. Has the olden time nothing which tempts you; and if any real advantage awaited you, would you not be willing to resume, in my company, and in that of our mutual friend, Porthos, the exploits of our youth?"

"Then it is a real proposition that you are making me, d'Artagnan?" said Athos.

"A plain and simple one."

"To re-enter the service?"

"Yes."

"On whose part, and against whom?" inquired Athos, suddenly fixing his clear benevolent eye on the Gascon.

"Oh, the fiend, you are so exacting!"

"And, more than all, very particular. Mark me well, d'Artagnan: there is only one person, or rather one cause, to which a man like myself can be useful—that of the king."

"That is precisely my case," said the musketeer.

"But let us thoroughly understand each other," replied Athos, very seriously. "If, by the king's cause, you mean that of M. Mazarin, we are at cross-purposes."

"I do not exactly say that," rejoined d'Artagnan, with some embarrassment.

"Come, d'Artagnan," said Athos, "there must be no finessing between us. Your hesitation, your turning and twisting, tell me plainly from whom you come. In fact, such a cause dare not be openly avowed. And any one who recruits for it, must do it with head depressed and faltering voice."

"Ah, my dear Athos!" cried d'Artagnan.

"You know, my dear d'Artagnan," continued Athos, "that I do

not refer to you, who are the pearl of brave and honourable men. I speak to you of that sordid and intriguing Italian—of that slave, who is trying to place a crown upon his head which he has stolen from a pillow—of that pitiful fellow, who, calls his own party that of the king, and who thinks of imprisoning the princes of the blood, whom he dares not kill, as our cardinal, the great cardinal, did—a skinflint, who weighs his golden crowns and keeps the parings, fearing, although he cheats, that he may lose them at the next day's play—a rascal, who, as they say, ill-treats the queen—so much the worse for her! and who, in three months, will bring upon us a civil war, that he may himself keep possession of the pensions. Is that the master that you propose for me, d'Artagnan? Many thanks to you!"

"You are more animated than formerly, God forgive me," said d'Artagnan; "and years, instead of cooling, have heated your blood. Who has told you that that was the master I wished to impose on you?"

"By Jove!" added the Gascon to himself, "we must not impart our secrets to a man so badly disposed as this is."

"But, my dear friend," said Athos, "what are your propositions, after all?"

"Oh, nothing can be more simple. You live on your estate, and appear to be satisfied with your golden mediocrity. Porthos has fifty or sixty thousand livres of rent, as far as I know. Aramis has always fifteen duchesses, who dispute for the abbé as they did for the musketeer: he is a spoiled child of fortune. But what am I doing in this world? I have borne my cuirass and buff coat for twenty years, chained down to this low and unsatisfactory grade, without advance or retreat. It is a mere vegetation: I may be said to be dead. Well, when there is a chance of my reviving in some measure, you all say to me—'A sordid fellow! a rascal! a pitiful dog! a bad master!' Ah, by my faith, I am of your opinion; but find me a better, or show me some means of procuring a larger income."

Athos reflected an instant, and then understood the game of d'Artagnan, who, finding that he had advanced too far, now

retreated to conceal his play. He saw clearly that the propositions d'Artagnan had made were genuine, and would have been fully developed had he lent a willing ear to them. "Good," said he to himself: "d'Artagnan belongs to Mazarin." And from this moment Athos was extremely guarded.

On his side d'Artagnan was more reserved than ever.

"But, after all," continued Athos, "you had some idea, had you not?"

"Yes, certainly: I wished to consult you all, and to devise some means of doing something; for, if disunited, we shall never be efficient."

"There I agree with you. You mentioned Porthos. Have you persuaded him to try his fortune? I thought that he had acquired it already."

"Yes, he has; but man is so constituted, that he always wants something."

"And what does Porthos want?"

"To be made a baron."

"Ah, it is true—I forgot," said Athos, laughing.

"It is true," thought d'Artagnan—"and whence has he learnt that? Does he correspond with Aramis? If I knew that, I should know everything."

Here the conversation terminated, for at that moment Raoul entered. Athos wished to scold him gently; but the young man was so distressed, that he had not the courage to do it; and, instead of it, inquired what was the matter?

"Is your little neighbour worse?" asked d'Artagnan.

"Ah, sir," replied Raoul, almost choked with grief, "her fall is very serious; and, without any apparent deformity, the surgeon fears that she may be lame for life"

"That would be very dreadful," said Athos.

D'Artagnan had a joke at the end of his lips, but, perceiving the tone which Athos assumed, he suppressed it.

"Ah, sir, what more than all drives me to despair," said Raoul, "is that the misfortune was caused by me."

"How so, Raoul?" inquired Athos.

"Because it was to come to me that she jumped from the fagots."

"Only one resource remains, my dear Raoul," said d'Artagnan, "and that is, to marry her, by way of expiation."

"Ah sir," said Raoul, "you laugh at a real sorrow, which is not right."

And Raoul, who wanted to be alone, that he might weep uninterruptedly, went to his room, from whence he did not return till breakfast-time.

The good feelings of the two friends had not been in the least altered by the little skirmish of the morning. They therefore breakfasted with the best appetite in the world, from time to time looking at poor Raoul, who, with tearful eyes and full heart, scarcely eat anything.

When breakfast was finished, two letters were brought in, which Athos read with great attention, without being able to avoid starting two or three times.

D'Artagnan, who observed him from the other end of the table, could almost have sworn that he recognised the handwriting of Aramis. The other was in a woman's hand, long and confused.

"Come, Raoul," said d'Artagnan, seeing that Athos wished to be alone, "let us take a turn in the fencing-room: it will amuse you."

The young man looked at Athos, who gave a nod of assent.

They entered a low room, where they found foils, masques, gloves, breast-plates, and all the instruments for fencing.

"Well?" said Athos, coming in, a quarter of an hour afterwards.

"He has already got your hand, my dear Athos," said d'Artagnan; "and had he acquired your coolness, I should have nothing but compliments to make him."

As for the youth, he was rather out of countenance: for one or two hits which he had made on d'Artagnan's arm or thigh, he had been buttoned twenty times, full on the body.

At this moment Charlot entered, with a letter of great consequence for d'Artagnan, which a messenger had just brought. It was now Athos's turn to look out of the corner of his eye.

D'Artagnan perused the letter, without betraying the slightest emotion; and, after having read it, slightly shaking his head, "There, my dear friend," said he, "see what it is to be in the service. Faith, you have good reason not to wish to resume it! M. de Treville is ill, and the company cannot do without me; so that my congé is expired."

"Do you return to Paris?" said Athos quickly.

"Yes, certainly," replied d'Artagnan: "are you going there yourself?"

Athos coloured slightly, and said, "If I go, I shall be much gratified in seeing you there."

"Halloo, Planchet," cried d'Artagnan from the door, "we shall be off in ten minutes. Give the horses some oats. Then turning to Athos: "It appears to me as if I miss something here, and I am very sorry to leave you without seeing Grimaud."

"Grimaud!" said Athos. "Ah, that is true: I am surprised you did not ask after him before. I have lent him to one of my friends."

"Who will understand his signs?" said d'Artagnan.

"I hope so," replied Athos.

The two friends embraced with great affection. D'Artagnan pressed Raoul's hand, made Athos promise that he would visit him if he went to Paris, and write if he did not go, and then mounted his horse Planchet, always in time, was already mounted.

"Are you not coming with me?" said d'Artagnan to Raoul, with a smile: "I pass through Blois."

Raoul turned towards Athos, who kept him back by an imperceptible sign.

"No, sir," replied the youth; "I remain with the count.'

"In that case, farewell to both of you, my good friends," said d'Artagnan, giving their hands a last squeeze, "and God preserve you! as we said, whenever we parted, in the times of the late cardinal."

Athos made a sign with his hand, Raoul bowed, and d'Artagnan and Planchet departed.

The count followed them with his eyes, his head resting on the

shoulder of the youth, who almost equalled him in height. But as soon as they had disappeared behind the wall, "Raoul," said the count, "we start for Paris this evening."

"What?" said the youth, growing pale.

"You may go and offer my adieus and your own to Madame St. Remy. I shall expect you here at seven o'clock."

The young man bowed with a mingled expression of sorrow and gratitude, and left the house to saddle his horse.

As for d'Artagnan, scarcely was he out of sight, before he drew his letter from his pocket and read it again—

"Return immediately to Paris.—J. M."

"The letter is dry enough, certainly," murmured d'Artagnan; "and if there was not a postscript, perhaps I should not have understood it; but fortunately there is one." And he read this famous postscript, which made him excuse the dryness of the letter:—

"P.S.—Go to the royal treasurer at Blois. Give my name, and show this letter, and you will finger two hundred pistoles."

"Decidedly," said d'Artagnan, "I admire this style of prose. The cardinal writes better than I thought. Come, Planchet, let us pay a visit to the king's treasurer, and then push forward."

"Towards Paris, sir?"

"Yes, towards Paris."

And they set off at full trot.

CHAPTER XVIII.

M. DE BEAUFORT.

We must now relate what had happened to render d'Artagnan's return to Paris necessary

One evening, when Mazarin was going to pay the queen his customary visit at the time when every one had retired to rest. on passing the door of a guard room which opened into the antechamber, he heard some loud talking; and wishing to know what they were saying, he

went softly up to the door, which was ajar, and putting his head close to it, listened attentively. There was a dispute amongst the guards.

"And I will answer for it," said one of them, "that, if Coysel has foretold this, the thing is as certain as if it had already taken place. I do not know him myself; but I have heard say, that he is not only an astrologer, but a magician."

"Take care, my dear fellow; if he is one of your friends, you are doing him a great injury."

"How so?"

"Because he may be indicted for it."

"Nonsense! they do not burn sorcerers now-a-days."

"No! And yet I fancy it is not long since the late cardinal burnt Urban Grandier. I know one thing, that I was on guard at his stake, and saw him roasted."

"My dear fellow, Urban Grandier was not a sorcerer, but a learned man, which is quite another thing. Urban Grandier did not predict the future, but knew the past, which is often the worst of the two."

Mazarin nodded his head in token of assent; but wishing to learn the prediction they were discussing, he remained in his place.

"I do not say," continued the guard, "that Coysel is not a sorcerer; but what I say is, that, if he publishes his prediction, it is a sure means of preventing its accomplishment."

"And why so?"

"The thing is clear. If you and I fight, for instance, and I tell you, now I shall give you a direct thrust, now a back-handed one, of course you will parry them, naturally enough. Well, then, if Coysel says openly, so that the cardinal may hear it, 'Before such a day M. de Beaufort will escape,' it is plain enough that the cardinal will take his precautions so effectually, that the prisoner will not escape."

"Ah, my God!" said another, who appeared to have been sleeping on a bench, but who, in spite of his apparent sleep, had not lost one word of the conversation—"and do you think that men can avoid their fate? If it is written on high that the Duke of Beau-

fort must escape, he will escape and all the precautions of the cardinal will be unavailing."

Mazarin started. He was an Italian—consequently superstitious.

He walked hastily into the midst of the guards, who, on seeing him, broke off their conversation.

"What were you saying, gentlemen?" inquired he, in his insinuating tone—"that M. de Beaufort had escaped, I believe."

"No, your excellence," answered the incredulous soldier. "At present he is in safe custody. We were saying that he would escape."

"And who says so?"

"Come, repeat your tale, St. Laurent," said the guard, turning towards the narrator of this prediction.

"Your excellence," said the guard, "I was simply stating to these gentlemen, that I had heard of a prediction of a certain Coysel, who pretends, that however strictly M. de Beaufort may be guarded, he will escape before Pentecost."

"And this Coysel is a dreamer—a madman?" said the cardinal, still smiling.

"No," said the guard, resolute in his credulity, "he has foretold many things which have happened: as, for example, that the queen would have a son; that M. de Coligny would be killed in a duel by the Duke of Guise; and, lastly, that the coadjutor would be a cardinal. Well, the queen has not only had one, but two sons; and M. de Coligny has been killed."

"Yes," said Mazarin; "but the coadjutor is not yet a cardinal."

"No, your excellence," said the guard, "but he will be one."

Mazarin made a grimace, as much as to say—he has not yet got the hat. Then he added—"Therefore your opinion is, my friend, that M. de Beaufort will escape?"

"It is so much my decided opinion, your excellence," replied the soldier, "that if your eminence were this very moment to offer me M. de Chavigny's situation of governor of Vincennes, I would not accept it. The day after Pentecost it would be quite another thing."

Nothing is more convincing than complete conviction: it influences even the incredulous; and far from being incredulous, we have said that Mazarin was superstitious. He therefore retired, quite pensive.

"The stingy dog!" said the guard who was leaning against the wall. "He pretends not to believe your magician, St. Laurent, that he may not have to give you anything; but he will no sooner have reached his own room, than he will take advantage of your prediction."

In fact, instead of continuing his way towards the queen's apartments, Mazarin returned to his cabinet, and calling Bernouin, he ordered him, at break of day, to send for the life-guardsman whom he had placed over M. de Beaufort, and that he should be awoke on his arrival.

Without suspecting it, the guard had touched Mazarin's tenderest point. M. de Beaufort had been five years in prison, and there was not a day that Mazarin did not think that he would escape, at some time or other. It was impossible to keep the grandson of Henry IV. in prison during his whole life, especially when this grandson of Henry IV. was scarcely thirty years old. But, however he might escape, what an accumulation of hatred must he have heaped up, during his captivity, against the author of it, who had taken him—rich, brave, and illustrious, beloved by the women, feared by the men—to cut off the brightest years of his life: for a man scarcely more than vegetates in a prison. In the mean time, Mazarin redoubled his vigilance around M. de Beaufort. Only, he was like the miser in the fable, who could not sleep near his treasure. Often, in the night, he awoke with a start, dreaming that they had stolen M. de Beaufort from him. Then he sent to inquire about him; and every fresh information he received, he had the sorrow to hear, that the prisoner played, drank, and sang, being in perfect health; but that, whilst playing, drinking, and singing, he often left off to swear that Mazarin should pay dearly for obliging him to enjoy these pleasures at Vincennes.

This idea had filled the mind of the cardinal during his sleep. Therefore, when Bernouin entered his chamber at seven in the

morning, to awake him, his first inquiry was—"What is the matter? Has M. de Beaufort escaped from his prison at Vincennes?"

"I do not think he has, your excellence," replied Bernouin, whose official calmness was never ruffled; "but at all events you will soon hear something about him, for La Ramée, the life-guardsman, for whom they sent this morning to Vincennes, is waiting your eminence's commands."

"Show him up," said Mazarin, arranging his pillows so that he might receive him sitting up in bed.

The officer entered. He was a tall, fat, chubby-cheeked, good-looking man, and had such an air of tranquillity, that Mazarin was quite frightened.

"That rascal looks like a fool," murmured he.

The officer remained standing silent at the door.

"Come in, sir," said Mazarin.

The officer obeyed.

"Do you know what they say here?" inquired the cardinal.

"No, your eminence."

"Why, they say that M. de Beaufort is going to escape from Vincennes, if he has not done it already."

The countenance of the officer expressed the most profound astonishment. He opened his little eyes and his large mouth at the same time, so that he might the more easily absorb the pleasantry which his eminence did him the honour to indulge in. Then, being no longer able to maintain his gravity at such a supposition, he burst out into such a paroxysm of laughter, that his fat limbs were shaken as if by a violent access of fever.

Mazarin was quite delighted at this ebullition, although it was not very respectful; but nevertheless he remained impenetrably grave himself.

When La Ramée had laughed heartily, and wiped his eyes, he began to think that it was time for him to speak, and to make some apology for his breach of decorum.

"Escape, your excellence?" said he: "escape! Why your eminence cannot know where M. de Beaufort is."

"Yes, sir, I know that M. de Beaufort is in the prison of Vincennes."

"Yes, your excellence, in a chamber, the walls of which are seven feet thick, with iron-grated windows, the cross-bars of which are as thick as my arm."

'Sir," said Mazarin, "with patience any wall may be broken through; and a bar may be sawn asunder by the spring of a watch."

"But your excellence does not know, that there are eight guards near him; four in his antechamber, and four in his room, and that these guards never leave him."

"But he leaves his chamber—he plays at mall, and at tennis."

'Your excellence, these are amusements which are permitted amongst the prisoners; yet, if your eminence wishes it, they can be stopped."

"No, no," said Mazarin, who feared, that, if he retrenched his pleasures, the prisoner, should he escape, would be still more exasperated against him—"I only want to know who plays with him."

"Your excellence, he plays with the officer on guard, or with myself, or with the other prisoners."

'But does he not go near the walls when he plays?"

"Your excellence does not know these walls. They are sixty feet high; and I doubt whether M. de Beaufort be sufficiently tired o. life to run the hazard of breaking his neck, by jumping from the top to the bottom."

"Hum!" said the cardinal, who began to regain his confidence. "You say, then, my dear M. la Ramée——"

"That unless M. de Beaufort should find some means of changing himself into a little bird, I will answer for him."

"Take care! You are very confident," replied Mazarin. "M. de Beaufort told the guards who were conducting him to Vincennes, that he had often thought of the chance of being imprisoned, and that, in that case, he had found out forty methods of escape."

"Your excellence, if, amongst these forty methods, there had been one practicable," replied la Ramée, "depend upon it, he would have been long since out of prison."

"Come, come—not such a fool as I thought," murmured Mazarin.

"Besides, your excellence forgets that M. de Chavigny is governor of Vincennes," continued la Ramée, "and that M. de Chavigny is no friend of M. de Beaufort."

"Yes; but M. de Chavigny is sometimes absent."

"When he is absent I am there.

"But when you are absent yourself?"

"Oh, when I am absent, I have in my place a fellow who aspires to become one of his Majesty's officers, and who, I promise you, keeps a good look-out. In the three weeks since I have taken him into my service, I have only one complaint to make against him; and that is, that he is too harsh to the prisoner."

"And who is this Cerberus?" enquired Mazarin.

"A certain M. Grimaud, your excellence."

"And what was he before he came to you at Vincennes?"

"Why, he lived in the provinces, as the person who recommended him informed me. He committed some sort of fault, I believe, and would not, I fancy, be sorry to secure impunity under the king's uniform."

"And who recommended this man to you?"

"The Duke de Grammont's steward."

"Then you think he may be trusted?"

"As completely as myself, your excellence."

"He is no babbler, is he?"

"So far from that, your eminence, I for a long time thought he was dumb. He speaks and answers only by signs. It appears that his old master trained him to it."

"Well, then, tell him, my dear M. la Ramée, that if he is a good and faithful keeper, I will shut my eyes upon his provincial pranks; that he shall wear a uniform which shall ensure him respect; and that, in the pocket of that uniform, some pistoles shall be found to drink the king's health."

Mazarin was very liberal of his promises. It was quite the contrary with the worthy M. Grimaud, whose merits la Ramée lauded so highly; for he spoke but little, and did a great deal.

The cardinal questioned la Ramée a good deal more concerning the prisoner, and about the way in which he was fed and lodged; to all which he answered so satisfactorily, that he dismissed him, almost entirely reassured in his own mind.

As it was now nine o'clock, he arose, dressed, and perfumed himself; and then visited the queen, to inform her why he had not come the evening before. The queen, who did not fear M. de Beaufort much less than the cardinal did, and who was almost equally superstitious, made him repeat, word for word, all la Ramée's promises, and all the eulogies he had bestowed on his assistant. When he had finished,

"Alas, sir," said she, in a low voice, "why have we not a Grimaud near each prince!"

"Patience!" said Mazarin, with an Italian smile, "we shall come to that in due time. But, in the meanwhile—"

"Well, in the meanwhile?"

"I will take my precautions."

And, accordingly, he wrote to d'Artagnan to return.

CHAPTER XIX.

HOW M. DE BEAUFORT AMUSED HIMSELF IN THE PRISON AT VINCENNES.

The prisoner, who caused M. Mazarin so much fear, and whose forty methods of escape disturbed the whole court, had no suspicion of the terror he inspired at the Palais Royal. He saw that he was so admirably guarded, that any attempt would have been utterly futile; and all his revenge consisted in uttering a thousand imprecations and abusive epithets against Mazarin. He had even endeavoured to compose some lampoons, but had quickly abandoned the idea. In fact, M. de Beaufort not only had not the power of making verses, but often found the greatest difficulty in expressing himself in humble prose. It is, therefore, easy to understand why the prisoner had confined himself to abuse and imprecations.

The Duke de Beaufort was the grandson of Henry IV. and Gabrielle d'Estrées: as brave, as good, as proud, and, above all as much of a Gascon as his grandfather, he was much less learned. After having been, for some time after the death of Louis XIII., in great favour and confidence, in short, the first at court, one day he was obliged to give way to Mazarin, and to take the second place; and the next day, as he had the folly to be angry at this transposition, and the imprudence to say so, the queen had him arrested, and carried to Vincennes by the same Guitaut whom we mentioned in the first part of this history, and whom we shall have occasion to bring forward again. It must be understood, that, when we say the queen, we mean Mazarin. Not only did they thus relieve themselves of his presence and pretensions, but they had no further consideration for him, popular as he was; and for five years he had inhabited a most unroyal chamber in the prison of Vincennes.

This space of time, which would have matured the ideas of any other person than M. de Beaufort, had passed over his head without producing the slightest change. Any other man would, in fact, have reflected, that if he had not set himself up to brave the cardinal, to despise the princes, and to stand alone, without any other supporters than, as says the Cardinal de Retz, a few melancholy visionary dreamers, he would long since have either had his liberty or found some supporters. These considerations probably never entered the head of the duke, whose long seclusion only more strongly confirmed his opposition; and every day the cardinal received accounts of him, which, to say the least, were very disagreeable to his eminence.

After having failed in poetry, M. de Beaufort had tried painting. He drew the cardinal's features with charcoal; and as his talent in this art was sufficiently moderate, and did not enable him to attain a great resemblance, that there might be no doubt as to the original of the portraint, he wrote underneath it—"*Ritratto dell' illustrissimo facchino Mazarini.*" M. de Chavigny, having been informed of this, paid the duke a visit, and requested him to amuse himself in some other manner, or at least to make portraits without inscriptions. The next day, the room was full of portraits and

inscriptions. M. de Beaufort, like most prisoners, much resembled children, who are only obstinate as to what is forbidden.

M. de Chavigny was informed of the addition made to the portraits. M. de Beaufort, not sufficiently sure of his own powers, had turned his room into a regular historical chamber. This time the governor said nothing; but when M. de Beaufort was playing mall, he passed the sponge over the pictures, and painted the walls in water-colours.

M. de Beaufort thanked M. de Chavigny for renewing his drawing paper, and now divided his room into compartments, each of which he consecrated to some particular feature in the life of Cardinal Mazarin.

The first represented the illustrious scoundrel Mazarini, receiving a shower of blows from the stick of his master, Cardinal Bentivoglio.

The second, the illustrious scoundrel Mazarini, playing the character of Ignatius Loyola, in the tragedy of that name.

The third, the illustrious scoundrel Mazarini, stealing the portfolio of the prime minister, M. de Chavigny, who fancied that he had still got it safe.

And the fourth, the illustrious scoundrel, Mazarini, refusing to give Laporte any sheets, and telling the king's valet-de-chambre that it was quite sufficient for a king of France to change his sheets once in three weeks.

These were subjects for great compositions, and they certainly surpassed the range of the prisoner's talent; therefore he contented himself with tracing the outlines, and placing inscriptions under them.

But the outlines and inscriptions were quite sufficient to excite the susceptibility of M. de Chavigny, who intimated to M. de Beaufort, that if he did not choose to renounce his pictures, he would deprive him of all means of executing them. M. de Beaufort replied, that since they deprived him of all chance of gaining a reputation by arms, he wished to gain one by painting; and that not being able to become a Bayard or a Trivulce, he wished to become a Michael Angelo, or a Raphael.

One day, whilst M. de Beaufort was walking on the green, his

fire was taken away, and with the fire the wood, and with the wood the brands; so that, on his return, he did not find one single thing with which he could make a pencil.

M. de Beaufort swore, stormed, and roared, said that they wanted to kill him with cold and damp, as Puylaurens, and Marshal Ornano, and the Grand Prior of Vendôme had died; to which M. de Chavigny answered, "That he had only to give his word to renounce drawing, or to promise to abandon his historical pictures, and they would furnish him with wood and firing." M. de Beaufort would not give his word, and remained without fire all the rest of the winter.

And more than that, whilst the prisoner was absent one day, they scratched out all the inscriptions; and the chamber became white and naked, without the trace of a fresco.

M. de Beaufort then bought a dog, named Pistache, from one of the gaolers, there being no prohibiton against a prisoner keeping a dog, and M. de Chavigny gave permission for the dog to change masters. M. de Beaufort remained, sometimes for hours, shut up with his dog. It was suspected that the prisoner was then engaged in the education of his dog; but no one knew what branch of education he was following. One day Pistache, having been sufficiently drilled, M. de Beaufort invited M. de Chavigny, and the officers of Vincennes, to a grand representation which he gave in his chamber. The guests arrived, the apartment was illumined by as many candles as M. de Beaufort could muster, and the spectacle began.

The prisoner, with a morsel of plaster which he had taken from the wall, had drawn a long line, like a cord, down the middle of the room. Pistache, at the first command of his master, placed himself on this line, stood up on his hind legs, and holding between his fore paws a small cane with which they beat clothes, he began to go down the line with all those contortions made by a rope-dancer; then, having gone up and down the line two or three times, he gave the stick to M. de Beaufort, resumed the same evolutions, but without balancing himself.

The intelligent animal was overwhelmed with applause.

The spectacle was divided into three parts. The first being finished, then began the second.

The question now was, to tell what o'clock it was. M. de Chavigny displayed his watch before Pistache: it was half-past six.

Pistache raised and depressed his paw six times, and, at the seventh, kept his paw suspended in the air. It was impossible to be plainer: a sun-dial could not have answered better; and, as every body knows, a sun-dial has the disadvantage of not being able to tell the hour except when the sun shines.

Then they were to learn who was the best gaoler in France.

The dog made the tour of the circle, and went and laid himself down, in the most respectful manner, at M. de Chavigny's feet.

M. de Chavigny pretended to think it an excellent joke, and laughed heartily; but when he had finished laughing, he began to bite his lips and frown.

At last, M. de Beaufort put this most difficult question to Pistache —"Who is the greatest thief in the world?"

Pistache now went round the room, and did not stop before any one, but going to the door, began to scratch.

"You see, gentlemen," said the prince, "this interesting animal, not finding what I asked for here, goes to look for it out of the room. But never mind, you shall not lose his answer on that account. Pistache, my friend," continued the duke, "come here."

The dog obeyed.

"The greatest known thief in the world," said the prince; "let us see: is it M. Camus, the king's secretary, who came to Paris with twenty livres, and is now worth six millions?"

The dog shook his head.

"Is it," continued the prince, "M. d'Emery, the superintendent, who gave to M. Thoré, his son, on his marriage, three hundred thousand livres of rent, and an hotel, in comparison of which the Tuileries is a ruin, and the Louvre a miserable hut?"

The dog again shook his head.

"What, is it not him?" continued the prince. "Come, we must inquire further. Can it chance to be that most illustrious rascal, Mazarini di Piscina, who is the greatest known thief in the world?"

Pistache made a most energetic sign of assent, by raising and nodding his head eight or ten times.

"There, gentlemen," said M. de Beaufort to his auditors, who this time dared show no signs of laughter, "you perceive that the most illustrious rascal Mazarini di Piscina is the greatest known thief in the world—at least, Pistache says so."

Let us, however, proceed to another exercise.

"Gentlemen," continued the Duke of Beaufort, taking advantage of the complete silence which now reigned, to give a sort of programme of the third act of this drama—"you may remember that the Duke of Guise taught all the dogs in Paris to leap for Mademoiselle de Pons, whom he proclaimed as the fairest of the fair. Well, gentlemen, that was nothing; for those dogs obeyed mechanically, not knowing how to make any dissidence (M. de Beaufort meant to say difference) between those for whom they ought to leap, and those for whom they ought not to leap. Pistache will show you and the governor, that he is far superior to his brethren. M. de Chavigny, will you have the goodness to lend me your cane?"

M. de Chavigny gave his cane to M. de Beaufort, who placed it horizontally, about a foot from the ground.

"Pistache, my friend," said he, "do me the pleasure to leap for Madame de Montbazon."

Everybody laughed: it was known that, at the time of his arrest, the Duke of Beaufort was the declared lover of Madame de Montbazon.

Pistache made not the slightest objection, but leaped merrily over the cane.

"But," said M. de Chavigny, "it appears to me that Pistache does exactly the same thing as his brethren, when they leaped for Mademoiselle de Pons."

"Wait," said the prince.

"Pistache, my friend," he continued, "leap for the queen."

And he raised the cane six inches higher. The dog leaped respectfully over the cane.

"Pistache, my friend," continued the duke, raising the cane six inches higher still, "leap for the king."

The dog took a spring, and, in spite of its height, leaped lightly over the cane.

"And now, attention!" continued the duke, lowering the cane almost even with the ground: "leap for the most illustrious scoundrel, Mazarini di Piscina."

The dog turned his tail to the cane.

"Halloo! what does this mean?" cried M. de Beaufort, describing half a circle from the tail to the head of the dog, and again placing the cane before him: "leap then, M. Pistache."

But Pistache, as before, turned half round, presenting his tail to the cane.

M. de Beaufort performed the same manœuvre, and repeated the same words; but this time Pistache's patience appeared to be exhausted; for he threw himself with fury on the cane, tore it from the prince's hands, and broke it with his teeth.

M. de Beaufort took the pieces from his mouth, and, with great gravity, restored them to M. de Chavigny, making many excuses, and informing him that the amusements were finished; but that if he wished to attend another representation, in three months Pistache should have acquired some fresh accomplishments.

Three days afterwards, Pistache was poisoned. The culprit was sought for, but, as may be supposed, remained undiscovered. M de Beaufort caused a tomb to be raised to him, with this epitaph:—

"Here lies Pistache, one of the most intelligent dogs that ever lived."

Nothing could be said against this euloguim, and M. de Chavigny could not prevent it.

But the duke openly declared that they had made an experiment of that drug upon his dog, meaning to use it upon himself; and one day, after dinner, he went to bed, crying out that he had the colic, and that it was Mazarin who had caused him to be poisoned.

This fresh prank reached the cardinal's ears, and terrified him greatly. The prison of Vincennes was considered very unhealthy; and Madame Rambouillet had said, that the room where Puylaurens, the Marshal Ornano, and the Prior of Vendôme had died, was worth its weight in arsenic; and the saying had gained credit.

Mazarin therefore gave orders that the prisoner should, for the future, eat nothing which had not before been tasted; and it was then that la Ramée, the officer, had been placed near him has a taster.

But M. de Chavigny had not yet pardoned the impertinences which the innocent Pistache had expiated. M. de Chavigny was one of the late cardinal's creatures; it was even said that he was his son. He therefore knew something of his tyranny; and he set about repaying M. de Beaufort's impudence. He removed what steel knives and silver forks had been as yet allowed him; and gave him silver knives and wooden forks. M. de Beaufort complained; but M. de Chavigny sent word that he had just learnt that the cardinal had told Madame de Vendôme that her son was imprisoned at Vincennes for his life; and that he feared the prisoner, on hearing such melancholy intelligence, might make an attempt on his life. A fortnight after, M. de Beaufort found a long row of trees, about as thick as a man's thumb, planted in the road which led to the tennis-ground; and when he inquired what this meant, he was told that it was to give him shade at some future day. One morning, also, the gardener came to him, and under pretence of obliging him, told him that he was going to plant some asparagus beds for him. Now, as every one knows, in the present day, asparagus takes four years before it can be available; but at that period, in the infancy of gardening, it took five years; and this civility put M. de Beaufort in a great rage.

Then M. de Beaufort thought that it was time to have recourse to one of his forty methods; and he tried the most simple first, which was to corrupt la Ramée, who had purchased his present appointment for fifteen hundred crowns, and much valued his situation. Therefore, instead of entering into the prisoner's views, he went and informed M. de Chavigny. M. de Chavigny immediately placed eight men in the prince's apartment, doubled the sentinels, and tripled their posts. From this time the prince always marched like a king on the theatre, with four men before, and four behind him, without reckoning those who marched alongside of him.

M. de Beaufort was, at first, much amused at this severity,

which distracted his mind. He repeated continually—"This amuses me—this *diversifies* me." M. de Beaufort meant to say, "this diverts me;" but, as we know, he did not always say what he meant. Then he added, "When I wish to withdraw myself from the honours you pay me, I have still thirty-nine other methods."

But this amusement at last became fatiguing. Out of braggadocia, M. de Beaufort bore it for six months; but at the end of that period, alway seeing eight men sit down when he sat down, rising when he arose, and stopping when he stopped, he began to frown, and to count the days.

This fresh persecution produced a greater asperity of hatred against Mazarin. The prince swore night and morning, talking of nothing but the amputation of the Mazarine ears. It was quite awful. The cardinal, who learnt everything that transpired at Vincennes, drew his nightcap down to his neck.

One day, M. de Beaufort mustered all the gaolers, and in spite of his difficulties in elocution, which had become proverbial, he made them a speech; which, to say the truth, had been prepared beforehand.

"Gentlemen," said he, will you allow the grandson of the good king Henry IV. to be *soaked* with outrages and ignobilities, [he meant to say ignominies.] Ventre-saint-gris! as my grandfather said, I have almost reigned in Paris. Do you know I kept guard over the king and monsieur a whole day. The queen favoured me then, and called me the honestest man in the realm. Gentlemen citizens, liberate me now, and I will go straight to the Louvre and wring Mazarin's neck. You shall be my body-guards. I will make you all officers, and give you capital pensions. Ventre-saint-gris! forward, march!"

But pathetic as it was, the eloquence of the grandson of Henry IV. did not touch these hearts of stone: not one stirred a step; which, when M. de Beaufort saw, he told them that they were a set of beggarly fellows, and made them his inveterate enemies.

Sometimes, when M. de Chavingny came to see him, which he did not fail to do two or three times a week, the duke took advantage of this to threaten him.

"What would you do, sir," said he, "if, one fine day, you saw an army of Parisians coming forward, barbed with iron, and bristling with muskets, to liberate me?'

"Your excellence," replied M. de Chavigny, bowing most profoundly to the prince, "I have twenty pieces of cannon on the ramparts, and thirty thousand shots in my casemates. I will cannonade them as well as I can."

"Yes; but when you have fired your thirty thousand shots, they will take the prison; and, that being taken, I shall be obliged to allow you to be hanged, for which I shall be very sorry, certainly."

And, in his turn, the prince bowed most politely to M. de Chavigny.

"But, your excellence," replied M. de Chavigny, "the first scoundrel who shall pass the threshold of my doors, or set his foot on the ramparts, I shall be compelled, much to my regret, to kill you with my own hand; seeing that you are entrusted particularly to me, and that I must give an account of you dead or alive."

And he again bowed to his highness.

"Yes," continued the duke; "but as, most certainly, these brave fellows will not come here before they have entertained M. Julio Mazarini with a little hanging, you will take special good care not to lay hands on me; and you will let me live, for fear of being torn to pieces with horses by the Parisians; which is much more disagreeable than being hung, do you see?"

These little jokes, having a pleasing mixture of sour and sweet in them, lasted sometimes ten, sometimes fifteen, sometimes even twenty minutes, but always finished in this manner:—

M. de Chavigny, turning to the door—"Halloo! la Ramée," he cried.

La Ramée entered.

"La Ramée," continued M. de Chavigny, "I recommend M. de Beaufort most particularly to your care: treat him with the consideration due to his name and his rank, and do not lose sight of him for one single moment."

Then he retired, saluting M. de Beaufort with an ironical politeness, which made him turn blue with rage.

La Ramée had, therefore, become M. de Beaufort's chum, his eternal guardian, his very shadow. But, to say the truth, the society of la Ramee—a jolly fellow, a free liver, a determined lover of the bottle, a great tennis-player, a good creature at the bottom, and having only one fault in M. de Beaufort's eyes, that he was incorruptible—was rather an amusement than an annoyance to the prince.

Unfortunately this feeling was not reciprocated by Master la Ramee; and although he considered it a great honour to be shut up with a prisoner of such vast importance, the pleasure of living on terms of familiarity with the grandson of Henry IV. did not compensate for that which he would have experienced from occasionally visiting his own family. A man may serve the king excellently well, and, at the same time, be a good father and a good husband. Now, Master la Ramee adored his wife and children, whom he could only see from the top of the wall, when they came to walk on the other side of the trenches, to afford him this conjugal and paternal consolation. It was too much for him; and la Ramee found that his joyous disposition, which he had considered the cause of his good health, without calculating that it was the result of it, would not hold out long against such a manner of living. This conviction grew stronger, when, by degrees, the exasperation between M. de Beaufort and M. de Chavigny became so violent, that they never met. La Ramee then found the responsibility pressing more heavily on his head; and as of course he sought for some relief, he received most cordially the offer made to him by his friend, the Marshal de Grammont's steward, to give him an assistant. He had therefore consulted M. de Chavigny on the subject, who informed him that he had no objection whatever to it, provided the applicant was approved of by him.

We consider it perfectly unnecessary to give our readers the physical and moral portrait of Grimaud. If, as we hope, they have not entirely forgotten the first part of this work, they must have retained a clear recollection of that estimable person, who had undergone no other change than the addition of twenty years to his age, an acquisition which had only made him more taciturn, although,

since the alteration in his own manners, Athos had given him full liberty of speech.

But at the period Grimaud had been silent for twelve or fifteen years; and a habit of twelve or fifteen years becomes a second nature.

CHAPTER XX.

GRIMAUD ENTERS INTO OFFICE.

Grimaud therefore entered the prison of Vincennes under the most favourable auspices. M. de Chavigny piqued himself on possessing an infallible eye, which gave force to the belief that he was the son of cardinal Richelieu, which he always pretended to be. He therefore examined the applicant with great attention, and fancied that the bushy eyebrows, thin lips, hooked nose, and high cheek-bones of Grimaud, were perfect indications. He only spoke twelve words to him: Grimaud answered by four.

"There is an invaluable fellow. I thought so at first sight," said M. de Chavigny. "Go and make your terms with M. la Ramée, and tell him that you suit me exactly."

Grimaud turned upon his heels, and went to undergo the far more rigorous examination of la Ramée. What made him more particular was, that he knew that M. de Chavigny depended upon him, and he wished to be able to depend upon Grimaud.

Grimaud had precisely the qualities to seduce a life-guardsman who wished for a deputy. Therefore, after a thousand questions, which produced exactly one quarter the number of answers, la Ramée, enchanted by this avarice of words, rubbed his hands, and enlisted Grimaud.

"Your instructions?" said Grimaud.

"The following:—Never leave the prisoner alone; deprive him of every sharp or pointed instrument; and prevent his making any sign to people without, or talking too long with his guards."

"Is that all?" inquired Grimaud.

"All for the present," answered la Ramêe. "Fresh circumstances will, of course, require fresh instructions."

"Good!" replied Grimaud. And he went to M. de Beaufort's apartment.

He was then engaged combing his beard, which he had allowed to grow as well as his hair, to make good his game against Mazarin, by displaying his misery, and making a show of his wretched appearance. But as, some days before, he had fancied that he saw, from the tops of the ramparts, the beautiful Madame de Montbazon in a carriage, he did not wish to appear before her in the same light as before Mazarin, having always retained a great affection for her. He had, therefore, in the hope of again seeing her, demanded a leaden comb, which had been granted him.

M. de Beaufort had asked for a leaden comb, because, like all fair men, his beard was rather red. He thus coloured his beard whilst he combed it.

Grimaud, on entering, saw the comb, which the prince had just placed on the table. He took it up, at the same time making a bow.

The duke looked with astonishment at this strange figure.

The figure put the comb into his pocket.

"Halloo! What does this mean?" cried the duke; "and who is this rascal?"

Grimaud did not answer, but bowed a second time.

"Are you dumb?" inquired the duke.

Grimaud made a sign that he was not.

"Who are you then? Answer, I command you," cried the duke.

"A guard," replied Grimaud.

"A guard!" exclaimed the duke. "Well, this hang-dog was only wanted to complete my collection. Halloo there! la Ramée, or some one!"

La Ramée, being thus called for, ran up hastily. Unfortunately for the prince, having confided his charge to Grimaud, he was just going to set off for Paris, was already in the court-yard, and turned back most unwillingly.

"What is the matter, prince?" said he.

"Who is this rascal, who takes my comb, and puts it into his filthy pocket?" demanded M. de Beaufort.

"He is one of your guards, your excellence—a fellow of infinite merit, and whom you will appreciate equally with M. de Chavigny and myself.'

"But why does he take my comb?"

"Ah, yes," said la Ramee, "why did you take his excellence's comb?"

Grimaud took the comb out of his pocket, passed his finger over it, and then looking at, and pointing to the large teeth, he contented himself with uttering the single word—"Pointed!"

"It is true," said la Ramee.

"What does the animal say?" demanded the duke.

"That every pointed instrument is prohibited by the king, your excellence."

"Ah! are you mad, la Ramée? Why, you gave me the comb yourself."

"And I was greatly to blame, your excellence; for, in giving it, I contravened my instructions."

The duke looked furiously at Grimaud, who had given the comb to la Ramee.

"I foresee that I shall cordially detest this rascal," murmured the prince.

In fact, there are no moderate sentiments in a prison. Every thing is either hated or loved, sometimes with reason, but oftener still by instinct. Now, by the simple process that Grimaud, at first sight, was pleasing to M. de Chavigny and la Ramee, it followed that the same qualities which recommended him to the governor and life-guardsman, made him instantly obnoxious to M. de Beaufort.

And yet Grimaud did not wish, on the very first day, to unmask himself to the prisoner. He had need, not of a sudden repugnance, but of a good, healthy, obstinate hatred. He therefore retired, to give place to the four guards, who, having finished breakfast, were to resume their office near the prince.

On his part, the prince wished to bring to perfection a certain fresh

joke, on which he had much calculated. He had demanded some lobsters for breakfast the next morning, and determined on passing the day in making a small gallows, to hang the finest in the middle of the room. The red colour which the boiling would give it, would leave no doubt as to the allusion; and thus he would have the pleasure of hanging the cardinal in effigy, in expectation of his being hanged in reality, without it being possible to reproach him with having hung anything but a lobster.

The day was passed in preparations for the execution. One becomes monstrously childish in prison, and M. de Beaufort was of a character more likely to become so than most men. He went out for his usual walk, broke off two or three small branches destined to play a part in his drama, and, after many researches, found a piece of broken glass, which seemed to give him great pleasure. Having returned to his room, he unravelled his pocket-handkerchief.

But none of these proceedings escaped Grimaud's observation.

The next morning the gallows was ready; and, that he might erect it in the middle of his room, M. de Beaufort began to sharpen one of the ends with his piece of broken glass.

La Ramée observed him with the curiosity of a father, who thinks that he is about to find a fresh plaything for his children, and the four guards with that careless unconcern which then, as now, constitutes the principal character of a soldier's countenance.

Grimaud entered just as the prince had laid the piece of glass down, although he had not yet quite sharpened the end of his gallows, but merely left off to fasten the string to its opposite end.

He cast a glance at Grimaud, which retained some portion of the ill-humour that he had conceived towards him the evening before; but as he was mightily pleased with the effect which his new invention would have, he did not pay any more attention to him. Only, when he had finished making a sailor's knot at one end of the string, and a slip-knot at the other—when he had cast a glance at his dish of lobsters, and made a secret choice of the most majestic one—he turned to look for his bit of glass, and found that it had disappeared.

"Who has taken my piece of glass?" demanded the prince, with a severe frown.

Grimaud made a sign that he had.

"How, you again! and why did you take it?"

"Yes," said la Ramée, "why did you take his highness's piece of glass?"

Grimaud, who held the piece of glass in his hand, passed his finger over the edge, and said—"Sharp!"

"It is true, your excellence," said la Ramee. "Faith! we have indeed got a most valuable fellow there!"

"M. de Grimaud," said the prince, "for your own sake, I beseech you never to come within reach of my hand."

Grimaud made a bow, and retired to the end of the room.

"Oh, never mind, your excellence," said la Ramee: "give me your little gallows, and I will sharpen it with my knife."

"You?" said the duke, laughing.

"Yes, I. Was it not that you wanted?"

"Yes, certainly. There, take it—it will be even more droll—take it, my dear la Ramée."

La Ramee, who had not the slightest idea of the cause of the prince's exclamation, sharpened the end of the gallows in the most skilful manner possible.

"There," said the prince, "now make me a small hole in the ground, whilst I go for the poor sufferer."

La Ramee put one knee to the ground, and made a hole.

In the meantime the prince fastened his lobster to the string. Then he fixed the gallows in the middle of the room, bursting with laughter.

La Ramée also laughed with all his heart, without very well knowing why he did so, and the soldiers laughed in chorus.

Grimaud alone did not laugh. He went up to la Ramée, and showing him the lobster turning round at the end of the string—"Cardinal!" said he.

"Hung by his highness the Duke of Beaufort," continued the prince, laughing louder than ever, "and by Master Jacques Chrysostome la Ramée, one of the king's life-guardsmen!"

La Ramée uttered a cry of terror, and rushed towards the gallows, which he tore from the ground, and immediately broke to pieces, and threw the fragments out of the window. He was going to do the same with the lobster, so completely had he lost his senses, when Grimaud took it from him.

"Good to eat!" said he, and put it in his pocket.

This time the duke had taken so much pleasure in this scene, that he almost pardoned Grimaud the character he had played in it. But, on reflection during the day, he weighed the motives of the guard, and finding that they must be bad, he felt his hatred for him much increased.

The history of the lobster, however, was not the less a source of much distress to la Ramee, and of a vast sensation not only within, but without the prison. M. de Chavigny, who at heart detested the cardinal, took care to confide the anecdote to two or three well-intentioned friends, who instantly spread it abroad.

But the duke, in the meantime, had remarked amongst his guards a man of good appearance, and he endeavoured to cajole him, the more willingly, that Grimaud became every moment more disagreeable to him. One morning, having taken this man aside, and having managed to converse some time alone with him, Grimaud entered, observed what was passing, and, approaching the guard and prince with great respect, he took the guard by the arm.

"What do you want?" said the duke, in a rough manner.

Grimaud led the guard some steps, and pointed to the door—"Go!" said he.

The guard obeyed.

"You are absolutely intolerable," said the duke: "I will drive you out of the room."

Grimaud bowed respectfully.

"I will break your bone!" cried the exasperated prince.

Grimaud bowed, at the same time retreating.

"Master Spy, I will strangle you with my own hands.

Grimaud kept still bowing and retreating.

"And that instantly," continued the duke, who thought he had better put an end to him immediately. He stretched forth his hands

towards Grimaud, who was quietly pushing the guard out, and shutting the door behind him.

At the same moment he felt the duke's hands fixed on his shoulders like a vice; but, instead of calling out or defending himself, he gently put his fore finger to his lips, and embellishing his countenance with its most fascinating smile, softly uttered the word,

"Silence!"

A sign, a smile, and a word, were so rare on Grimaud's part, that his highness was arrested in utter astonishment. Grimaud took advantage of this moment, to draw from the lining of his doublet, a pretty little note, with a most aristocratic seal, the original perfume of which had not been entirely destroyed by its long residence in Grimaud's dress, and presented it to the duke without saying one word.

The duke, more and more astonished, let go his hold of Grimaud, took the note, and recognising the writing.—"From Madame de Montbazon!" said he.

Grimaud gave a nod of assent.

The duke tore open the envelope, drew his hand across his eyes, so completely was he dazzled, and read what follows:—

"My dear duke.

"You may trust entirely to the brave fellow who will give you this letter, for he is the valet of a gentleman of our party, who has answered for his fidelity, proved by a service of twenty years. He has agreed to enter into the service of your life-guardsman, and to shut himself up in Vincennes to assist your escape, about which we are now occupied.

"The moment of deliverance approaches: be patient and courageous, in the assurance, that, in spite of time and absence, all your friends have retained for you those sentiments which they before experienced.

"Your most devoted and affectionate

"MARIE DE MONTBAZON."

"P.S. I sign at length; for it would be too much vanity to imagine, that, after an absence of five years, you would recognise my initials."

The duke remained utterly confounded for a minute or two. What he had been seeking for five years, without being able to find it, namely, a faithful servant, an assistant, a friend, had suddenly fallen from the heavens, at the moment when he least expected it. He looked at Grimaud with astonishment, and returned to the letter, which he again read from beginning to end.

"Oh dear Marie," murmured he, when he had finished it; "it was, then, her whom I saw in the carriage. And she still thinks of me, after a separation of five years. Faith, it is a constancy only to be found in the *Astræa*.

Then turning to Grimaud:

"And you, my brave fellow," added he, "you agree to assist me?"

Grimaud made an assenting sign.

"And you are come expressly for that purpose?"

Grimaud repeated the sign.

"And I, who wished to strangle you!" exclaimed the duke.

Grimaud began to smile.

"But wait," said the duke. And he began to poke into his pocket. "Wait," continued he, renewing the fruitless search: "it shall not be said that such devotion to a grandson of Henry IV. was suffered to pass unrecompensed."

The duke's motion denoted the very best intention in the world; but one of the precautions at Vincennes was, never to leave a prisoner with a farthing of money.

Grimaud, seeing the duke's disappointment, pulled a purse full of gold from his pocket, and gave it to him, saying, "This is what you are looking for, your excellence."

The duke opened the purse, and would have emptied it into Grimaud's hands, but he shook his head.

"Thank your excellence," said he, drawing back—"I am paid."

The duke fell back with surprise. He stretched out his hand, which Grimaud kissed respectfully. The noble manners of Athos had left their impress on his servant.

"And now," said the duke, "what are we to do?"

"It is now eleven o'clock in the morning," replied Grimaud: "at

two o'clock your excellency must demand a game at mall with la Ramee, and send two or three balls over the ramparts."

"Well, and after that?"

"After that, your excellency must go to the wall, and call out to a man, who is working in the trenches, to throw them back to you."

"I understand," said the duke.

Grimaud's countenance expressed a lively satisfaction; for from the slight use he made of words habitually, conversation was difficult to him. He made a motion as if to retire.

"Then you will not accept of anything?" said the duke.

"I should like your excellency to make me a promise."

"And what is that?"

"It is, that when we escape, I may go over the first; for if your excellency should be taken, all that they can do to you is to restore you to your prison; whilst, should I be taken, the least they will do is to hang me."

"That is too true," said the duke; "and, on the word of a gentleman, it shall be as you have requested."

"Now," said Grimaud, "I have only one thing to ask your excellency: it is, that you will continue to do me the honour to detest me as much as you did before."

"I will endeavour to do so," replied the duke.

Some one rapped at the door. The duke put the letter and the purse into his pocket, and threw himself on his bed. This was known to be his great resource in moments of annoyance. Grimaud opened the door; it was la Ramee, who had just come from the cardinal, where the scene had passed which we have recounted in a former chapter.

La Ramee cast a searching glance around; and seeing all the same symptoms of antipathy between the prisoner and his guard, he smiled, full of internal satisfaction. Then, turning to Grimaud—"Very well, my friend, very well. You have been spoken of favourably in a certain place, and I hope will soon receive news that will not be disagreeable to you."

Grimaud bowed with an air which he endeavoured to make grate-

ful, and left the room, which was his custom when his superior entered.

"Well, your excellence," said la Ramee, with his horse, laugh, "so you are always grumbling at that poor fellow."

"Ah! is it you, la Ramee?" said the duke. "Faith, it was time for you to come. I threw myself on the bed, and turned my face to the wall, that I might not give way to the temptation of strangling that wretch, Grimaud."

"I fear, then," said la Ramee, making a witty allusion to the taciturnity of his subordinate, "that he has said something disagreeable to your highness."

"I think so, indeed. An oriental mute! I vow that it was time for you to return, la Ramee, and that I longed to see you."

"Your excellence is too good," said la Ramee, flattered by the compliment.

"Yes," said the duke, "I really feel an awkwardness to-day, which you will be delighted to see."

"We shall have a game of tennis, then," said la Ramee, quite mechanically.

"If you like."

"I am at your excellency's command."

"You are a charming man," said the duke, "and I almost wish to remain for ever at Vincennes, for the pleasure of passing my life with you."

"I believe, your excellency," said la Ramee, "that it will not be the cardinal's fault if your wishes be not fulfilled."

"What do you mean? Have you seen him lately?"

"He sent for me this morning."

"Really! To talk about me?"

"What else would you expect him to talk to me about? Really, your excellence, you are his night-mare."

The duke smiled bitterly. "Ah," said he, "if you would accept my offers, la Ramee."

'Come, your excellence, you are going to talk of that again; but you must perceive that, in so doing, you are by no means reasonable."

"La Ramee, I have told you, and I repeat it, that I will make your fortune."

"With what? You will have no sooner got out of prison, than your property will be confiscated."

"I shall no sooner be out of prison, than I shall be master of Paris."

"Hush, hush! Can I listen to such matters as these? This is a pretty sort of conversation to hold with one of the king's officers. I see plainly, your excellence, that I must look out for a second Grimaud."

"Well, then, we will say no more about it. So the cardinal and you have been talking about me. La Ramee, you must one day let me put on your dress. I will go in your place: I will strangle him; and, by the faith of a gentleman, upon that condition I will return to prison without compulsion."

"Your excellence, I see plainly that I must call Grimaud."

"I am wrong. But what did the rascal say?"

"Oh, fie, your excellence! What he said was, that I must watch you closely."

"And why?" inquired the duke, somewhat uneasy.

"Because an astrologer has predicted that you will escape."

"Ah! has an astrologer predicted that?" inquired the duke, starting in spite of himself.

"Oh, yes. Upon my honour, those foolish magicians are always dreaming, to torment honest folks."

"And what answer did you give to his most illustrious eminence?"

"That if the astrologer in question made almanacks, I would advise him not to buy any."

"And why?"

"Because, to escape, you must become a chaffinch or a wren."

"Unfortunately, you are quite right. Come, let us have a game of tennis, la Ramee."

"Your excellence, I solicit a thousand pardons of your highness, but would you grant me half an hour?"

"For what purpose?"

"Because his excellence Mazarini is more proud than you are, although not of such high birth, and he forgot to invite me to breakfast."

"Do you wish me to send for your breakfast here?"

"No, your excellence. I must tell you that the confectioner, who lived opposite the chateau, and whom they called Father Marteau——"

"Well?"

"A week ago he sold his property to a Parisian confectioner, to whom, it seems, the physicians recommended country air."

"Well, what have I to do with this?"

"Wait a bit, your excellence. This cursed confectioner has a pile of things displayed in his shop, which actually make one's mouth water."

"Gourmand!"

"Oh dear, your excellence, one is not a gourmand because he likes to eat what is good. It is natural for man to seek for perfection in pies, as in everything else. Now, this rogue of a confectioner, I must confess to your excellence, when he saw me stopping before his shop, came to me, with his tongue all over flour, and said—

"'M. la Ramee, you must procure me the custom of the prisoners at the chateau. I have purchased the establishment of my predecessor, because he assured me that he supplied the chateau; and yet I will give you my honour, M. la Ramee, that during the fortnight that I have been here, M. de Chavigny has not bought so much as a tartlet of me.'

"'But,' said I, 'perhaps M. de Chavigny fears that your pastry may not be good.'

"'My pastry not good! Well, M. la Ramee, I will make you the judge, and this very moment.'

"'I cannot,' said I, 'for I must absolutely return to the chateau.'

'"Well,' said he, 'go about your affairs, as you appear in a hurry, but return in half an hour.'

"'In half an hour?'

"'Yes; have you breakfasted?'

"'Faith, I have not.'

"'Well, here is a pasty which shall be ready for you, with a bottle of old Burgundy.' And you understand, your excellence, as I am fasting, I would, with your highness's permission——"

And la Ramee bowed.

"Go, then, you animal," said the duke; "but mark well, that I only give you half an hour."

"And may I promise your custom to Father Marteau's successor?"

"Yes, provided that he does not put mushrooms in my pasties. You know that the mushrooms of the wood of Vincennes are deadly to my family."

La Ramee left the room, without taking any notice of this allusion; and, five minutes after, the officer on guard entered, under the pretence of paying honour to the prince, but, in reality, to execute the commands of the cardinal, who, as has been said, had given orders that they should never lose sight of the prisoner.

But during the five minutes that he had been alone, the duke had found time to read again Madame de Montbazon's letter, which proved that his friends had not forgotten him, but were busily employed for his deliverance—in what manner he knew not yet; but he promised himself that, in spite of his taciturnity, he would eventually make Grimaud speak. He had the more confidence in him, from giving him credit for all his conduct, and from now understanding that he had only invented all these petty persecutions, n order to prevent the slightest suspicion of his having any intercourse with him.

This cunning gave the duke a high idea of Grimaud's intellect, and he resolved to place the most implicit confidence in him.

CHAPTER XXI.

WHAT THE PASTIES OF FATHER MARTEAU'S SUCCESSOR CONTAINED.

Half an hour after, la Ramee returned, joyous and happy, like a man who has eaten, or rather has drank well. He had found the pasties excellent, and the wine delicious.

The weather was fine, and favourable for playing ball. This was done at Vincennes in the open air. Nothing, therefore, was easier than for the duke to do what Grimaud had told him, namely, to send the balls into the trenches.

And yet, until the clock had struck two, the duke was not very awkward; for two o'clock was the hour appointed. But yet he lost every game up to that time, which gave him an excuse for getting into a rage, and consequently, as is usual, to commit fault after fault.

Therefore, just as the clock struck two, the balls began to fly into the trenches, to la Ramee's great delight, who scored fifteen for every ball sent over by the prince.

So many were sent over, that at last the balls began to fail. La Ramee proposed to send some one round to pick them up. But the duke judiciously observed that it would be lost time; and going up to the rampart, which, at this place, as the officer had said, was fifty feet high, he saw a man working in one of those numerous little gardens which the peasants cultivated on the other side of the trench.

"Halloo, my friend," cried the duke.

The man raised his head, and the duke was near uttering an exclamation of surprise. This man, this peasant, this gardener, was Rochefort, whom he believed to be in the Bastile.

"Well, what do you want up there?" inquired the man.

"Have the kindness to throw us back our balls," said the duke.

The gardener nodded, and began to throw back the balls, which la Ramee and the guards picked up. One of them fell at the duke's

feet; and, as it appeared especially meant for him, he picked it up, and put it into his pocket. Then, having thanked the gardener by a sign, he returned to his game.

But the duke was decidedly in bad play, for the balls continued to go out of bounds: two or three went into the trench; but, as the gardener was no longer there to pick them up, they were lost. Then the duke said that he was ashamed of such bad play, and did not wish to continue it.

La Ramée was delighted at having so completely beaten a prince of the blood.

The prince retired to his room, and laid down, which he did almost every day since they had taken his books from him.

La Ramée took away the prince's clothes, under the pretence of their being covered with dust, to have them brushed; but, in reality, that the prince might not move. La Ramée was a most careful and prudent man. Fortunately, the prince had found time to conceal the ball in his bolster. As soon as the duke was alone, he tore open the covering of the ball with his teeth; for they had left him no sharp instrument. He always ate with thin silver knives, which were perfectly blunt. Under the covering was a letter, containing the following lines:—

"Your Excellence,

"Your friends are on the watch, and the hour of your deliverance draws near. Ask for a pasty, the day after to-morrow, from the new confectioner, who has purchased the business of the old shop, and who is no other than Noirmont, your house-steward. Do not open the pasty until you are alone. I hope that you will be satisfied with its contents.

"Your Excellence's most devoted servant,

At the Bastile, as elsewhere,

"Count de Rochefort."

"P. S. Your highness may place the most implicit confidence in Grimaud: he is a most intelligent fellow, entirely devoted to us."

The Duke of Beaufort, whose fire had been restored since he had given up painting, burnt the letter, as he had most unwillingly been obliged to do with that of Madame de Montbazon; and he was

about to do the same with the ball, when it struck him that it might be useful to him in sending an answer to Rochefort. He had but just finished, when la Ramée entered.

"Does your highness want anything?" said he.

"I was cold," replied the duke, "and was getting the fire together to warm myself. You know, my dear la Ramée, that the chambers of the Vincennes prison are famed for their coolness. Ice might be kept here, and they produce saltpetre. Those in which Puylaurens, the Marshal d'Ornano, and my uncle the grand prior died, were, on that account, worth their weight in arsenic, as Madame de Rambouillet said."

And the duke laid down again, concealing his ball in his bolster. La Ramée smiled slightly. He was, at the bottom, an excellent fellow: he had conceived a great affection for his illustrious prisoner, and would have been much distressed had any misfortune befallen him. Now, the successive misfortunes which had happened to the three persons above-named were incontestible.

"Your excellence," said he, "you should not give way to such thoughts as those. It is such thoughts that kill, and not the saltpetre."

"Ah, my dear fellow," said the duke, "you are quite delightful. If I could go with you, and eat pasties and drink Burgundy at Father Marteau's successor's, it would much amuse me."

"Oh, your excellence, those pasties are indeed delicious, and the wine is most excellent."

"At any rate," replied the duke, "his cellar and kitchen may asily be better than those of M. de Chavigny."

"Well, then," said la Ramée, falling into the snare. "what should prevent you tasting them? Besides, I promised him your custom."

"You are right," said the duke. "If I must remain here for ever, as the cardinal says, I had better invent some amusement for my old days, and become a gourmand."

"Your excellence," said la Ramée, "take a piece of advice: do not wait till you are old for that."

"Good," said the duke to himself. "Every man, to destroy

his soul and body, must have received from the beneficence of heaven one of the seven capital sins, even if he has not received two. It appears, therefore, that master la Ramée's capital sin is gormandizing. Never mind: we will take advantage of it." Then he added aloud—"Well, then, my dear la Ramée, the day after to-morrow is a feast."

"Yes, your excellence, it is the Pentecost."

"Would you like to give me a lesson the day after to-morrow?"

"In what?"

"In good living."

"Most willingly, your excellence."

"But a lesson *tête-à-tête*. We will send the guards to dine at M. de Chavigny's canteen, and will ourselves have a supper, the directions for which I leave entirely to you."

"Hum!" said la Ramée.

The offer was very tempting; but la Ramée, however unfavourably the cardinal might consider his appearance, was a shrewed old dog, who knew every trap which a prisoner might lay. M. de Beaufort had, he said, prepared forty plans of escape. Did not this supper conceal some cunning device?

He reflected a moment; but the result of his reflection was, that, as he was to order the provisions and wine, no powder could be spread on the provisions, or any drug mixed with the wine. As for making him drunk, the duke could not have formed any such intention, and the mere idea of it made him laugh. Then a sudden thought made everything easy.

The duke had followed la Ramée's internal soliloquy with much anxiety, as far as he could observe it; and at last the officer's countenance cleared up.

"Well," said the duke, "does the proposition suit you?"

"Yes, your excellence, on one condition."

"And what is that?"

"It is that Grimaud may wait upon us at table."

Nothing could be better for the prince; yet he had sufficient command over himself to make his countenance assume an expression of ill-humour.

"The fiend take your Grimaud!" he exclaimed: "he will quite spoil the feast."

"I will command him to stand behind your highness; and, as he breathes not a syllable, your highness will neither see nor hear him, and may imagine that he is a hundrd leagues from you."

"My dear la Ramée," said the duke, "do you know that I perceive, from all this, that you distrust me mightily."

"Your excellence, the day after to-morrow is Pentecost."

"Well, and what have I to do with Pentecost?"

"Did I not tell your excellence the prediction of that cursed magician?"

"And what did he predict?"

"That the day of Pentecost should not pass without your highness being out of Vincennes."

"You believe in magicians, then, you silly fellow?"

"I?" said la Ramée—"I do not care that for them." And he snapped his fingers. "But it is M. Giulio who cares for them: being an Italian, he is superstitious."

The duke shrugged his shoulders. "Well," said he, with the most natural good-humour in the world, "so let it be. I accept of Grimaud, for otherwise we shall never settle anything. You must take the management of everything—you must order the viands: all I want is one of those pasties you mentioned. You must order it in my name, that Father Marteau's successor may even surpass himself; and you will promise him my custon, not only as long as I remain in prison, but also after I have left it."

"You think then, even now, that you shall quit it?" said la Ramée.

"Why," answered the prince, "even should it not be till Mazarin's death, I am fifteen years younger than he is. It is true," he added, laughing, "that one lives faster at Vincennes."

"Your excellence!" cried la Ramée—"your excellence!"

"Or one dies sooner," added the duke, "which comes to the same thing."

"Your excellence," said la Ramée, "I am *going to* order the supper."

"And do you think that you can make anything of your scholar, la Ramee?"

"I hope so, your excellence," replied la Ramee.

"If he gives you time for it," murmured the duke.

"What does your excellence say?"

"I say that you need not spare the purse of the cardinal, who has taken it into his head to burden himself with my support."

La Ramee stopped at the door. "Whom does your excellence wish me to send to you?"

"Any one you like, except Grimaud."

"The officer on guard, then."

"Yes, with his chess-board."

"Yes;" and la Ramee left the room.

In five minutes the officer on guard entered the room, and immediately afterwards the Duke of Beaufort appeared to be absorbed in the sublime conbinations of chess.

Thought is a most singular thing, and what revolutions does one word, or sign, or hope, produce in it. The duke had been five years in prison; and, on looking back at these five years, which had passed very slowly, they actually appeared shorter than the two days, the forty-eight hours, which yet separated him from the preiod fixed for his escape.

Then there was one thing which occupied him most intensely. It was, in what way his escape was to be accomplished. He had been made to hope for the result, but they had concealed from him the mysterious details connected with this famous pasty. What friends awaited him? He had, then indeed friends, after five years, imprisonment. He was a most favoured prince.

He forgot that, besides these friends, and still more extraordinary, a woman had not forgotten him. She might not perhaps have been scrupulously faithful to him; but she had not forgotten him, which alone was a great thing.

All this was quite enough to engage M. de Beaufort's thoughts. Therefore, at chess as at tennis, M. de Beaufort committed fault upon fault, and the officer beat him, as la Ramee had done in the morning

But these successive defeats had this advantage, that they brought the prince to eight o'clock in the evening. It was at any rate three hours gained. Then came the night, and, with the night, came sleep. At least, so thought the duke. But sleep is a most capricious deity, and it is exactly when you invoke her that she refuses to come. The duke waited for her till midnight, turning and twisting on his bed like St. Laurent on his gridiron. At last, however, he slept.

But with the day he awoke. He had the most fantastic dreams: wings had sprouted from his sides; then he naturally endeavoured to fly, and, at first, the wings had performed their office properly; but having reached a certain height, this support had suddenly failed him, his wings had broken, he had seemed to fall into a fathomless abyss, and had awoke covered with perspiration, just as if he had fallen in reality.

Then he had again slept, only to wander afresh in a Dædalus of dreams, each more senseless than the other. Scarcely was he asleep when his mind, fixed only on one object—his escape—applied itself to attempt this escape. Now the circumstances were quite different: a subterranean passage had been discovered, which was to conduct him out of Vincennes; he was engaged in this passage, and Grimaud was walking before him, with a lantern in his hand; but gradually the passage grew narrower, and yet the duke continued his course; at last the subterranean passage became so narrow, that the fugitive in vain endeavoured to go forward; the sides of the walls contracted, and squeezed him between them; he made incredible efforts to thrust himself forward, but it was impossible; and yet he saw Grimaud before him with his lantern, still walking on; he wished to call him back to assist in pulling him out of this defile, which was smothering him, but he could not utter a word. Then, at the other exremity of the passage by which he had come, he heard the steps of his pursuers; these steps drew near; he was discovered, and had no longer any hope of escape. The wall appeared to be leagued with his enemies, and to press him closer, the more he struggled to escape; at last he heard the voice of la Ramee, and then he saw him; la Ramee thrust forth his hand, and laid it upon his shoulder, roaring with laughter; he was taken, and conducted to

that low-vaulted chamber where the Marshal Ornano, Puylaurens, and his uncle had died; their three tombs were there, embossing the earth; and a fourth grave was open, only waiting for a dead body.

Therefore, when he awoke, the duke made as great efforts to keep himself awake, as he had before made to sleep; and when la Ramee came in the morning, he found him so pale and worn out, that he asked him if he was ill.

"Really," said one of the guards, who had passed the night in the room, and who had not been able to sleep from the tooth-ache—"his excellence has passed a most disturbed night, and two or three times called for help in his dreams."

"What is the matter, your excellence?" inquired la Ramee.

"Ah, it is you you fool?" replied the duke, "who with all your nonsense about escaping, made me dream that I made the attempt, and in doing it, broke my neck."

La Ramee burst into laughter.—"You see then," said he, "it is an admonition from Heaven, and I hope that your excellence will never commit such follies, except in your dreams."

"You are quite right, la Ramee," said the duke, wiping away the perspiration, which yet stood on his forehead; "I do not wish to think of any thing, for the future, but eating and drinking."

"Hush!" said la Ramee. And he sent away the guards upon various pretences.

"Well," said the duke, when they were alone.

"Well?" said la Ramee, "your dejeuner is ordered."

"And of what will it consist?" inquired the prince: "let us hear, sir Major-domo."

"Your excellence promised to depend upon me."

"And will there be a pasty?"

"I believe so, indeed—as big as a tower."

"Made by Father Marteau's successor?"

"It is ordered."

"And you told him that it was for me?"

"I did tell him so."

"And what did he say?"

"That he would do his best to satisfy your highness."

"That's well," said the duke, rubbing his hands.

"Zounds, your excellence," said la Ramee, "how you take to good living. I never before saw you with such a joyous countenance during all the five years I have known you."

The duke saw that he had not been sufficiently master of his feelings; but at that moment, as if he had heard something from the door, and had perceived that it was necessary to distract la Ramee's attention, Grimaud entered, and made la Ramee a sign that he had somewhat to tell him. La Ramee went up to Grimaud, who spoke to him in, a low voice. In the meantime, the duke recovered himself.

"I forbad this man to come in without my permission," he exclaimed.

"You must pardon him, your excellence," said la Ramee, "for I ordered him."

"And why did you do so, when you knew that I disliked it?"

"Your excellence remembers what has been agreed upon," said la Ramee, "and that he is to wait upon us at that famous supper. Has your excellence forgotten the supper?"

"No, but I had forgotten M. Grimaud."

"Your excellence, there can be no supper without him."

"Well then, do as you please."

"Come here, Grimaud," said la Ramee, "and hear what I have to say to you."

Grimaud approached with his sourest look.

La Ramee continued: "his excellence has done me the honour to invite me to a *tête-à-tête* supper to-morrow."

Grimaud made a sign, as much as to say, what have I to do with that?

"Yes, yes," said la Ramee, "you have something to do with it; for you will have the honour to wait on us; without reckoning, that however hungry and thirsty we may be, something will be left in the dishes, and at the bottom of the bottles, which will be for you."

Grimaud bowed his thanks.

"And now, your excellence," said la Ramee, "I demand pardon

of your highness. It appears that M. de Chavigny is about to absent himself for some days, and before his departure, he has some orders to give me."

The duke endeavoured to exchange a glance with Grimaud; but Grimaud's imperturbable visage gave no response.

"Go," said the duke to la Ramée, "but return as soon as you can."

"Would your excellence like to take your revenge at ball?"

Grimaud gave an imperceptible sign with his head.

"Yes," said the duke. "But take care, my dear la Ramée: the days follow, but do not resemble each other; so that I am determined to give you a good beating this morning."

La Ramée left the room. Grimaud followed him with his eyes, without moving the rest of his body from the perpendicular; and when he saw the door shut, he drew a pencil and sheet of paper hastily from his pocket. "Write, your excellence," said he.

"And what am I to write?"

Grimaud dictated:—"Everything is prepared for to-morrow evening. Keep a look-out from seven till nine o'clock. Have two led horses ready. We shall descend by the first window of the gallery."

"And after?" inquired the duke.

"After?" said Grimaud, quite astonished—"after? Why, sign it."

"And is that all?"

"What can you want more, your excellence?" replied Grimaud, who was for the strictest brevity.

The duke signed it.

"And now," said Grimaud, "has your excellence lost the ball?"

"What ball?"

"That which contained the letter."

"No; I fancied that it might be useful to us. There it is." And the duke took the ball from his bolster, and gave it to Grimaud.

Grimaud gave his most charming smile.

"Well now?" said the duke.

"Well, your excellence," answered Grimaud, "I sew the paper

in the ball, and, whilst you are playing, you must send it over into the trench."

"But perhaps it will be lost?"

"No, your excellence, there will be some one to pick it up."

"A gardener?" asked the duke.

Grimaud nodded assent.

"The same as yesterday?"

Grimaud repeated his sign.

"Then it is the Count de Rochefort."

Grimaud nodded three times.

"But come," said the duke, "at any rate tell me something about the measures which are to be used to accomplish my escape."

"That is forbidden," said Grimaud, "before the moment of execution."

"Who are those who will await me on the other side of the trench?"

"I know nothing about it, your excellency."

"But at any rate, if you would keep me from becoming mad, tell me what are to be the contents of this famous pie?"

"Your excellence," said Grimaud, "it will contain two daggers, a knotted cord, and a *choke-pear** or gag."

"Ah! I understand."

"Your excellence perceives that there will be something for each of us."

"We shall take the daggers and cord for ourselves," said the duke.

"And we will make la Ramée eat the pear," said Grimaud.

"My dear Grimaud," said the duke, "you do not speak often; but when you do favour us, you utter golden words."

* A choke-pear was a complete gag; it was in the shape of a pear, was thrust into the mouth, and, by means of a spring, expanded itself so as to distend the jaws to their utmost extent.

CHAPTER XXII.

ONE OF MARY MICHON'S ADVENTURES.

About the same hour that these plans of escape were being laid by the Duke of Beaufort and Grimaud, two horsemen, followed at a short distance by a lacquey, entered Paris by the rue du faubourg St. Marcel. These two men were the Count de la Fère and the Viscount de Bragelonne.

It was the first time that the young man had visited Paris; and Athos, by showing him the first view of it from this side, had not been very anxious to give him a favourable impression of the capital, his ancient friend. Assuredly the last village of Touraine was of a more pleasing aspect than Paris, seen in the quarter leading to Blois. Therefore we must confess, that this far-famed city produced but a slight effect upon the youth.

Athos had his usual air of calm indifference. Having reached St. Medard, he took the rue des Postes, then that of l'Estrapade, then that of Fosses St. Michel, then of Vaugirard. When they came to the rue Ferou, the travellers went down it. About half-way down the street, Athos raised his eyes with a smile, and pointing to a citizen's house—"There," said he, "Raoul, there is a house where I passed seven of the most happy and most unhappy years of my life."

The young man smiled in his turn, and bowed to the house. His pious love for his protector, manifested itself in every act of his life.

As to Athos, we have said that Raoul was not only the centre, but, saving his old military recollections, the sole object of his affections; and it may be easily imagined, of what deep and even profound affection, the heart of Athos was now capable.

The two travellers stopped at the rue du Vieux Colombier, at the sign of the *Renard Vert*. Athos had known this tavern of old. A hundred times had he visited it with his friends; but there had been many changes in it during the last twenty years, beginning with its masters.

The travellers gave their horses to the servants, and, as they were of high blood, recommended them particularly to their care, directing that they should only give them chaff and oats, and should rub their legs and chests with warm wine. They had travelled twenty leagues in the day. Then, having first taken care of their horses, as every genuine cavalier should do, they requested two chambers for themselves.

"You must go and dress, Raoul," said Athos; "I am about to introduce you to some one."

"To-day, sir?" demanded the young man.

"In half an hour."

The youth bowed. Less indefatigable than Athos, who appeared to be made of iron, he would probably have preferred a bath in that Seine, of which he had heard so much, and which he was determined to find inferior to the Loire, and afterwards his bed; but the Count de la Fère had spoken, and he thought of nothing but obedience.

"By the by," said Athos, "take some pains with your toilet. I wish you to be thought handsome."

"I hope, sir," said the youth, smiling, "that there is no question of marriage? You remember my engagements with Louise."

Athos laughed. "No, do not distress yourself," said he—"although it is a woman to whom I am going to introduce you."

"A woman!" cried Raoul.

"Yes, and I shall expect you to love her."

The youth looked at the count with some anxiety; but seeing Athos smiling, he became more easy.

"And what age is she?" demanded the Viscount de Bragelonne.

"My dear Raoul, learn once for all," replied Athos, "that that is a question which is never asked. When you can read a woman's age in her countenance, there is no use in asking it; when you cannot, it is indiscreet."

"And is she beautiful?"

"Sixteen years ago she had the character of being, not only the most beautiful, but the most graceful, woman in France."

This answer quite reassured Raoul. Athos could not possibly

have any project concerning him and a woman who was considered the most beautiful and most graceful woman in France, a year before he was born. He therefore retired to his chamber, and, with that foppery so excusable in youth, began to follow Athos's instructions; that is, to make himself as handsome as possible. And this was no very difficult matter, considering what nature had done for him.

When he came down, Athos received him with such a paternal smile as he had formerly bestowed on d'Artagnan, but which was impressed with a more profound tenderness when directed towards Raoul.

Athos cast a glance at his feet, his hands, and his hair, those three signs of high breeding. His dark hair was gracefully parted, as it was then worn, and fell in curls, shading his face; gloves of gray doeskin, which matched his hat, marked out his elegant and slender hand; whilst boots of the same colour confined a foot which appeared to be that of a boy of ten years old.

"Come," said he, in a low voice, "if she is not proud of him, she must be fastidious indeed."

It was three o'clock in the afternoon, just the proper time for making calls. The two travellers went towards the rue de Grenelle, then went down the rue des Rosiers, entered the rue St. Dominique, and stopped before a splendid hotel, opposite the Jacobins, surmounted by the arms of Luynes.

"Here it is," said Athos.

He entered the hotel with that firm step which assured the Swiss that he had a right to do so. He mounted the steps, and addressing a servant in magnificent livery, inquired if Madame the Duchess de Chevreuse was visible, and if she would receive M. le Count de la Fère.

A moment after, the servant returned, and said, that although the Duchess de Chevreuse had not the honour of knowing the Coount de la Fère, she requested him to enter.

Athos followed the servant, who led him through a long suite of apartments, and at last stopped before a door, which was closed. They were in a saloon. Athos made Raoul a sign to remain where he was.

The servant opened the door, and announced the Count de la Fère.

Madame de Chevreuse, of whom we have so often spoken in our history of *The Three Musketeers*, without ever having had an opportunity of describing her, was yet considered a very beautiful woman. Indeed, although she was now about forty-four or forty-five years old, she scarcely appeared thirty-eight. Her fair hair was still beautiful, her large intelligent eyes were still full of fire, and her sylph-like figure was still most symmetrical; so much so, that when you walked behind her, she looked like the young girl who jumped over the trench of the Tuileries with Anne of Austria—thereby, in 1623, depriving the crown of France of an heir. Besides, she was still the same giddy creature who has cast such a stamp of originality over her amours, that they are become a sort of illustration of her family.

She was in a small boudoir, the window of which looked on the garden. This boudoir, according to the fashion which Madame de Rambouillet had introduced on building her hotel, was hung with a sort of blue damask, with red flowers and gold leaves. There was much coquetry in a woman of the age of Madame de Chevreuse living in such a boudoir, and, more than all, in her being reclined, as at present, on a sofa, her head resting against the tapestry. She held a half-opened book in her hand, and had a cushion to support the arm which held the book.

At the announcement of the servant, she partly raised herself, and thrust her head forward with considerable curiosity.

Athos made his appearance. He was dressed in violet-coloured velvet, with embroidery of the same colour; his points were of dead silver; his mantle was embroidered with gold; and a plain violet-coloured plume drooped over his dark hat. He had boots of black leather; and from his polished girdle hung that sword, with its magnificent handle, which Porthos had so often admired in the rue Ferou, and which Athos would never lend him. The falling collar of his shirt was composed of splendid lace; and lace also hung over the tops of his boots.

There was in the whole person of him who had been announced

under a name completely unknown to Madame de Chevreuse, such an air of the gentleman of high condition, that she half rose, and gracefully motioned to him to take a seat.

Athos bowed and obeyed. The servant was about to retire, when Athos made him a sign to remain.

"Madame," said he to the duchess, "I have had the audacity to present myself at your hotel without being known to you. I have so far succeeded, since you have deigned to receive me. I have now to request you to grant me half an hour's conversation."

"I grant it to you, sir," replied Madame de Chevreuse, with her most gracious smile.

"But that is not all, madame. I know that I am very presumptuous; but the conversation which I request is *tête-à-tête*, and I am most anxious not to be interrupted."

"I am at home to no one," said the duchess to the servant. "Leave the room."

The lacquey departed.

There was a moment's silence, during which these two persons, who saw at the first glance that they were both of high birth, examined each other without the slightest embarrassment. The duchess first broke silence.

"Well, sir," said she, "do you not perceive that I am waiting with impatience?"

"And I, madame," replied Athos, "I am looking with admiration."

"Sir," said Madame de Chevreuse, "you must excuse me for being anxious to know to whom I am speaking, You are of the court, that is quite evident, and yet I have not seen you there. Have you just come out of the Bastille?"

"No, madame," replied Athos, smiling, "but I am probably on the road to it."

"Ah, in that case, tell me quickly who you are, and be off with you," cried the duchess, with that tone of gaiety which was so charming in her; "for I am already sufficiently compromised, without being more so."

"Who I am, madame? My name has been announced—the Count de la Fère. This name you have never known. Formerly I bore another, which perhaps you knew, but which you have certainly forgotten."

"Tell it me, however, sir."

"Formerly," replied the count, "I was called Athos."

Madame de Chevreuse opened her large eyes with astonishment. It was evident that this name was not, as the count had supposed, entirely effaced from her memory, although much confounded amid ancient recollections.

"Athos?" said she. "Wait now."

And she placed her hands on her forehead, as if to compel the thousand fugitive ideas so far to concentrate as to enable her for one instant to have a clear view of that brilliant and chequered assemblage.

"Shall I assist you, madame?" said Athos, smiling.

"Yes," replied the duchess, already fatigued with the effort—"you will much oblige me."

"This Athos was united with three young musketeers, who were called d'Artagnan, Porthos"—Athos paused.

"And Aramis," added the duchess, with great vivacity.

"Yes, Aramis—that's it," said Athos: "you have not, therefore forgotten that name?"

"No," said she: "poor Aramis! He was a charming, gentlemanly man, elegant, discreet, and made pretty verses. I believe that he has turned out badly," said she.

"Oh, very badly indeed! He has become an abbé."

"Ah, what a sad misfortune!" said Madame de Chevreuse, carelessly playing with her fan. "Really, sir, I am extremely obliged to you."

"For what, madame?"

"For having recalled this recollection to me, which is one of the most agreeable souvenirs of my youth."

"And will you allow me to recall another?"

"Which is connected with the former?"

"Yes, and no.

"Faith, sir, you may say anything," replied Madame de Chevreuse: "I shall run no risk from such a man as you are."

Athos bowed. "Aramis had some connexion," said he, "with a young seamstress of Tours."

"A young seamstress of Tours?" said Madame de Chevreuse.

"Yes, a cousin of his, who was called Marie Michon."

"Oh, yes, I knew her," said Madame de Chevreuse: "it was her to whom he wrote during the siege of la Rochèlle, to warn her of a plot which was formed against that poor Buckingham."

"Exactly so," said Athos. "Would you allow me to speak to you concerning her?"

Madame de Chevreuse looked earnestly at Athos. "Yes," answered she, "provided that you will not speak too severely of her."

I should then be ungrateful," said Athos; "and I look upon ingratitude, not merely as a fault or crime, but as a vice, which is much worse.'

"You ungrateful to Marie Michon, sir?" exclaimed Madame de Chevreuse, endeavouring to read Athos's eyes. "How in the world can that be? You never knew her personally."

"Oh, madame, who knows?" replied Athos. "There is a popular proverb, that it is only mountains that do not meet; and popular proverbs are often wonderfully true."

"Well, go on, go on, sir," said Madame de Chevreuse, with extreme vivacity, "for you can have no idea how greatly this conversation amuses me."

"You encourage me," replied Athos, "and therefore I proceed. This cousin of Aramis—this Marie Michon—in fine, this young seamstress—in spite of her humble condition, had the highest connexions. She called the most courtly dames her friends; and the queen, proud as she is, from her double origin from Austria and Spain, called her sister."

"Alas!" said Madame de Chevreuse, with a gentle sigh, and a slight movement of the eyebrows peculiar to herself, "things are sadly changed since that time."

"And the queen was right," continued Athos, "for she was

much devoted to her; so much so, as to make her the medium of communication with her brother, the King of Spain."

"Which is now imputed to her as a great crime," replied the duchess.

"So that the cardinal," continued Athos, "the other—the real cardinal, resolved to arrest poor Marie Michon, and send her to the castle of Loches. Fortunately this project could not be executed so secretly, but that it transpired; and the case had been provided for. Should Mary Michon be threatened by any danger, the queen was to send her a mass-book bound with green velvet."

"Exactly so, sir! you are well informed."

"One morning this green book arrived, being brought by the Prince Marsillac. There was no time to lose. Fortunately, Mary Michon, and a servant she had, named Kitty, wore men's clothes admirably well. The prince procured them for them—for Marie Michon the dress of a cavalier, and for Kitty that of a lacquey—and gave them two excellent horses. The fugitives quitted Tours in great haste, and directed their steps towards Spain, trembling at every sound, following bye lanes, because they dared not pursue the high road, and demanding hospitality when they could not find an inn."

"Well, really, that is exactly the truth!" exclaimed Madame de Chevreuse, clapping her hands together: "it would be singular indeed—"

She stopped herself.

"Shall I follow the two travellers to the end of their journey?" said Athos. "No, madame, I will not waste your time in that manner, and we will only accompany them to a little village of Limousin, situated between Tulle and Angoulême—a little village, called Roche-l'Abeille."

Madame de Chevreuse uttered a cry of surprise, and looked at Athos with an expression of astonishment, which made the old musketeer smile.

"Wait, madame," said Athos; "for what remains to be told is far more singular than what I have yet narrated."

"Sir," cried Madame de Chevreuse, "I take you for a sorcerer:

there is nothing which I do not expect from you, but really—never mind, proceed."

"This day the journey had been very long and fatiguing. It was cold, for it was the fourteenth of October. There was neither inn nor chateau in this village, and the peasant's houses were poor and dirty. Mary Michon was a very aristocratic person; and, like the queen her sister, she was accustomed to delicate odours and fine linen. She determined, therefore, to demand hospitality at the priest's house." Athos paused.

"Oh, continue!" said the duchess: "I told you that I expected everything."

"The two travellers knocked at the door: it was late; and the priest, who was in bed, called out for them to come in."

"They entered, for the door was not fastened: there is no distrust in such villages. A lamp was burning in the priest's chamber. Marie Michon, who made the most charming cavalier in the world, pushed open the door, thrust in her head, and demanded hospitality."

"'Willingly, young gentleman,' answered the priest, 'if you will be satisfied with the remains of my supper, and a share of my apartment.'

"The two travellers consulted together a moment. The priest heard them laughing heartily. Then the master, or rather the mistress, replied,

"'Thank you M. Curé, I accept your offer.'

"'Then sup, and make as little noise as you can help,' replied the priest, 'for I also have been travelling all day, and I shall not be sorry to sleep to-night.'"

Madame de Chevreuse evidently proceeded from surprise to astonishment, and from astonishment to stupefaction. Her countenance, whilst looking at Athos, had assumed an expression impossible to describe: it was plain that she would have spoken, but yet held her tongue for fear of losing one word uttered by her visitor.

"And afterwards?" said she

"Afterwards!" replied Athos. "Ah! now comes the difficulty."

"Speak! speak speak! You may tell me all. Besides, it does not concern me: it is Mary Michon whom it concerns."

"Ah! that is true," said Athos. "Well, then, Mary Michon supped with her maid; and after supper, according to the permission which had been given, entered her host's apartment; whilst Kitty settled herself in an easy chair, in the room where they had supped."

"Really, sir," said Madame de Chevreuse, "except you are his infernal majesty himself, I cannot imagine how you came to know all these circumstances."

"Mary Michon was a charming woman," continued Athos—"one of those mad creatures into whose minds the strangest ideas constantly enter—one of those beings born for our destruction. Now, considering that her host was a priest, it entered this coquette's head, that it would be a gay memorial for her old age, to have contributed to the condemnation of an abbé"

"Count," exclaimed the duchess, "you absolutely frighten me."

"Alas!" proceeded Athos, "the abbé was not a St. Ambrose, and Mary Michon was a charming creature."

"Sir!" exclaimed the duchess, seizing Athos's hands, "tell me instantly how you know all these circumstances, or I will send for a monk of the Vieux-Augustins, and will have you exorcised!"

Athos began to laugh. "Nothing easier, madame. A cavalier who was himself charged with a mission of importance, had, an hour before you, come to demand hospitality at the priest's dwelling, at the very moment that the priest was called out to a dying man, and was about to quit, not only his house, but the village, for the night. Then the priest, having full confidence in his guest, who was in fact, a gentleman, had given up to him his house, his supper, and his bed. It was, therefore, from the guest, and not from the abbé himself, that Mary Michon had demanded hospitality."

"And this cavalier—this guest—this gentleman, who arrived before her.—"

'Was myself, the Count de la Fère," replied Athos, rising, and bowing respectfully to the duchess.

The duchess remained a moment in utter stupefaction, and then

suddenly bursting into laughter. "Ah! by my faith," said she, "it is very droll. This madcap, Mary Michon, found better than she expected. Sit down, my dear count, and finish your tale."

"Now, madame, I must make my apologies. I have told you that I was travelling on an important mission. At the break of day I left the room very quietly, leaving my charming companion asleep. In the other room I found the maid-servant, also asleep, with her head resting on the chair. Her pretty face struck me, and, on approaching her, I recognised that little Kitty, whom our friend Aramis had recommended to her. And thus I learnt that the charming traveller was—"

"Mary Michon," said the duchess, with great quickness.

"Mary Michon," replied Athos. "Then I left the house, went to the stable, found my horse saddled, and my servant ready, and we immediately departed."

"And did you never revisit that village?" said Madame de Chevreuse, with great vivacity.

"A year after, madame."

"Well, then?"

"Well! I wished to see the good priest again. I found him much occupied with an event which he could not comprehend. He had, a week before, received a charming little boy, of three months old, with a purse full of gold, and a note containing these simple words:—11th October, 1633."

"It was the date of this singular adventure," replied Madame de Chevreuse.

"Yes, but he did not understand anything about it, except that he had passed the night with a dying man. For Mary Michon had herself quitted his house before his return."

"You must know, sir," said the duchess, "that Mary Michon, on her return to France, in 1643, sent to gain some information concerning this child; for, as a fugitive, she could not take care of it; but on her return, she wished to have it educated near her, at Paris."

"And what did the abbe say?" demanded Athos.

"That a nobleman, whom he did not know, had taken charge of

it, had made himself responsible for its future welfare, and had taken it away with him."

"And it was true."

"Ah! I understand now! That nobleman was yourself—was his father."

"Hush! Do not speak so loud, madame. He is there."

"He is there!" exclaimed Madame de Chevreuse, rising quickly: —"he is there! my son—the son of MaryMichon —is there! I must see him this instant!"

"Observe, madame, that he neither knows his father nor his mother," said Athos.

"You have kept the secret, and have brought him here, thinking that it would make me very happy. Oh, thanks, thanks, sir!" exclaimed Madame de Chevreuse, seizing his hand, and endeavouring to carry it to her lips—"Thanks! you have indeed a noble heart!"

"I bring him to you," said Athos, withdrawing his hand, "that you may, in turn, do something for him, madame. Till now, I have carefully watched his education, and I have made him, I think, an accomplished gentleman. But the time is come when I find myself obliged to resume the wandering and dangerous life of a party-man. To-morrow I enter upon a hazardous adventure, which may cost me my life. Then he must depend upon you for his progress in the world, where he must play a part."

"Oh, you may be assured on that point," exclaimed the duchess. "Unfortunately, I have but little interest at present, but what I have shall be exerted for him. As for his fortune and his title—"

"Do not distress yourself about that, madame. I have resigned the estate of Bragelonne to him, which I inherited, and which gives him the title of viscount, and ten thousand livres a year."

"Upon my honour, sir," said the duchess, "you are a noble gentleman. But I am most eager to see our viscount. Where is he?"

"There, in the saloon. I will bring him, if you wish it."

Athos went towards the door. The duchess stopped him.

"Is he handsome?" said she.

"He resembles his mother," replied Athos.

At the same time he opened the door, and made a sign to the young man, who appeared on the threshold.

Madame de Chevreuse could not refrain from uttering an exclamation of joy at seeing such a charming cavalier, who surpassed the proudest hopes that she could have formed.

"Viscount, come near," said Athos: "Madame the Duchess de Chevreuse permits you to kiss her hand."

The young man approached, with his sweet smile, and head uncovered, put one knee to the ground, and kissed the hand of Madame de Chevreuse.

"Count," said he, turning towards Athos, "do you not, in pity for my timidity, tell me that this lady is the Duchess de Chevreuse, when she is the queen?"

"No, viscount," said Madame de Chevreuse, taking his hand, and making him sit near her, and looking at him with eyes sparkling with delight—"No, unfortunately I am not the queen, or I would immediately treat you according to your merits. But such as I am"—she continued, with difficulty refraining from pressing her lips on his polished forehead—"such as I am, let me know what career you wish to follow?"

Athos regarded them with an indescribable expression of happiness.

"Why, madame," said the young man, with his soft and melodious voice, "it appears to me that there is but one career for a gentleman—that of arms. M. le Count has educated me, I believe, with the intention of making me a soldier; and he led me to hope, that, on coming to Paris, he would introduce me to some one who would recommend me to the prince."

"Yes, I comprehend. It is a good thing for a young soldier, like you, to serve under a young general, like the prince. But let us see: at present I am on bad terms with him, on account of the disputes of my mother-in-law, Madame de Montbazon, with Madame de Longueville. But through the Prince de Marsillac—ah, really, count, that's it—M. le Prince de Marsillac is an old friend of mine: he will recommend our young friend to Madame de Longueville, who will give him a letter to her brother the prince,

who loves her too dearly not to comply immediately with her wishes."

"That will do excellently well," said the count; "only, may I recommend the very greatest despatch. I have reasons for wishing the viscount to leave Paris before to-morrow evening."

"Do you wish your name to be mentioned, count?"

"It were better perhaps for him that it should not be known that I have ever had any connexion with him."

"Oh, sir!" cried the young man.

"You know, Bragelonne," said Athos, "that I never do anything without sufficient reason."

"Yes, sir," said the young man, "I know that you are wisdom itself, and I will obey you, as I have hitherto done."

"Well, then," said the duchess, "leave him with me, count. I will send for the Prince de Marsillac, who is fortunately in Paris and will not quit him till I have gained my point."

"A thousand thanks, duchess. I have much to do to-day; and, at about six in the evening, I shall expect the viscount at the hotel."

"What are you going to do this evening?"

"We are going to the abbe Scarron's. I have a letter for him, and expect to meet one of my friends at his house."

"Very well," said the duchess. "I will look in there myself for a minute or two. Do not leave his house until you have seen me."

Athos bowed, and was leaving the room.

"Well, sir count," said the duchess, laughing, "is that the formal way in which you leave an old friend?"

"Ah," murmured Athos, kissing her hand, "had I but sooner known what a charming creature Mary Michon was—"

And he left the room with a sigh.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE ABBE SCARRON.

There was a house in the rue des Tournelles which all the chairmen and lacqueys of Paris knew; and yet it was not the habitation of a nobleman or financier. There was no feasting there: they never played; and danced very seldom. And yet it was the rendezvous of fashionable society, and all Paris went there. This house belonged to little Scarron.

There was so much laughter at the witty abbé's—so much news was detailed—this news was so rapidly discussed, analyzed, and transmuted, whether into tales or epigrams, that every one wished to pass an hour with little Scarron, to hear what he said, and to retail it in other places. Many were also ambitious of letting off their own witticisms; and, if they were funny, of course they themselves were very acceptable.

The little Abbé Scarron—who, after all, was only an abbé because he possessed an abbey, and not because he was in orders—had formerly been one of the most dandy prebendaries of the town of Mans. One day, during the carnival, wishing most outrageously to amuse this good town of Mans, of which he was the life and soul, he made his valet rub him all over with honey: then, having opened a feather bed, he rolled himself in it, so that he became the most grotesque specimen of the bird kind that ever was seen. He then commenced a series of visits to his male and female friends, in this strange costume. At first, he was followed with astonishment; then with laughter and cries; then the porters began to abuse him, and the children to pelt him with stones; until at last he was obliged to scamper off to avoid the projectiles. Directly he began to fly, all the world followed him: he was tracked, hunted, and ferreted out of every retreat, and he found no other means of escaping his pursuers, than by throwing himself into the river. He swam like a fish, but the water was as cold as ice. Scarron was in a violent perspiration; the cold seized him, and on reaching the other side, he was paralyzed.

Every method which was known at that time was tried to restore the use of his limbs; and they made him suffer so much by their treatment, that he dismissed his physicians, declaring that he preferred the disease. Then he went to Paris, where his character as a man of talent had been already established. There he had a chair made, of his own invention; and one day, when he paid Anne of Austria a visit in this chair, she, being delighted with his talent, asked him if he would not like to have some title.

"Yes, your majesty, there is one of which I am vastly ambitious," replied Scarron.

"And what is that?" demanded Anne of Austria.

"The title of your *Invalid*," replied the abbé.

And Scarron was thenceforth nominated "The queen's invalid," with a pension of fifteen hundred livres.

From this moment, with no further anxiety for the future, Scarron had passed a merry life, living upon his pension, and the income of his abbey.

One day, however, one of the cardinal's emissaries gave him a hint that he was wrong in receiving the coadjutor.

"And why?" demanded Scarron; "is he not a man of high birth?"

"Oh yes!"

"Amiable?"

"Without doubt."

"A man of talent?"

"Unfortunately he has too much talent."

"Well, then," said Scarron, "why do you wish me to discontinue my acquaintance with such a man?"

"Because he thinks ill of—"

"Really! Of whom?"

"Of the cardinal."

"Why!" replied Scarron, "I continue to receive M. Gilles Deapreaux, who thinks ill of me; and would you have me refuse to receive the coadjutor, because he thinks ill of another person? Impossible!"

Here the conversation dropped; and Scarron, from a spirit of opposition, had seen even more of M. de Gondy than before.

Now, the very morning of the day which we have reached, and which was the last day of his three months, Scarron, as usual, had sent his lacquey to the pension-office, with a receipt, to obtain his three months pay; but an answer had been returned, "that the state had no more money for the Abbe Scarron."

When the lacquey brought this answer to Scarron, the Duke de Longueville was with him, and offered to give him a pension of twice the amount of which Mazarin had deprived him; but the cunning invalid took good care not to accept it. He managed so well, however, that, at four o'clock in the afternoon, the whole capital had heard of the cardinal's refusal. It happened to be Thursday, the very day of the abbe's reception. The people went there in crowds, and railed against the government with the greatest violence, even all through the city.

Athos met two gentlemen in the rue St. Honore, who were unknown to him. They were on horseback, and followed by a lacquey, as he also was, and going the same way. One of them took off his hat, and said,

"Can you believe, sir, that that scoundrel Mazarin has deprived poor Scarron of his pension?"

"It is quite incredible," said Athos, bowing at the same time to the two gentlemen.

"It is evident that you are an honest man, sir," said the same gentleman, who had before addressed Athos; "and this Mazarin is really a scourge."

"Alas, sir," replied Athos, "to whom do you say this?"

And they separated with infinite politeness.

"This happens very well, as we must go there this evening," said Athos to the viscount: "we will pay our compliments to the poor man."

"But who then is this M. Scarron, who puts all Paris into such commotion?" demanded Raoul. "Is he a disgraced minister?"

"Oh, no, viscount," "replied Athos; "he is simply a little gentleman, of considerable talent, who must have fallen into disgrace with the cardinal, for having composed some quatrain against him."

"And do gentlemen make verses?" demanded Raoul, with great simplicity: "I thought that it was degrading."

"Yes, my dear vicount," replied Athos, laughing, "when they make bad ones; but when they make good ones, it raises their reputation. Look at M. de Rotrou. And yet," continued Athos, in the tone of one giving a piece of salutary advice, "I believe that it is better not to make any."

"Then," said Raoul, "this M. Scarron is a poet?"

"Yes. Now you are prepared, vis count, be very guarded in that house. Speak only by gestures, or rather listen."

"Yes, sir," replied Raoul.

"You will perceive me talking a good deal with one of my friends, the Abbé d'Herblay, whom you have often heard me mention."

"I remember it, sir."

"Come towards us sometimes, as if to address us, but without speaking to us; and do not listen to us. This plan will keep troublesome people from interrupting us."

"Very well, sir, I will strictly follow your injunctions."

Athos paid two visits in Paris; and then, at about seven o'clock, they went towards the rue des Tournelles. The street was blocked up by chairmen, horses, and footmen. Athos pushed through them, and entered, followed by the young man. The first person that attracted his attention, on entering, was Aramis, installed near a very large easy chair, on castors, covered by a canopy of tapestry, under which, in a state of perpetual motion, and enveloped in a brocaded cloak, was a little figure, young and gay enough, but sometimes turning pale, although his eyes never lost their animated, talented, and courteous expression. It was the Abbé Scarron, always gay, jesting, complimenting, suffering, and scratching himself with a small stick.

Around this kind of moveable tent, a crowd of gentlemen and ladies was pressing. The apartment was very neat, and suitably furnished. Large silk curtains, embroidered with flowers, the colours of which had formerly been brilliant, but were now a little faded, hung from the lofty windows; the tapestry was unpretending, but

of good taste. Two lacqueys, extremely polite, and drilled to good manners, served with great eclat.

On seeing Athos, Aramis came up to him, took him by the hand, and introduced him to Scarron, who expressed as much pleasure as respect for his new guest, and paid an elegant compliment to the viscount. Raoul was quite confused, for he was not prepared for the majesty of genius. Nevertheless, he bowed gracefully.

Athos next received the compliments of two or three gentlemen, to whom Aramis introduced him. Then the slight disturbance caused by his entrance gradually subsided, and the conversation became general.

In four or five minutes, which Raoul employed in recovering himself, and in taking a topographic view of the assembly, the door opened, and a servant announced Mademoiselle Paulet.

Athos touched Raoul on the shoulder. "Look at that lady, Raoul," said he, "for she is an historical personage. Henry IV. was going to her house when he was assassinated."

Raoul started. At every moment, for many days, some curtain had been raised for him, discovering an heroic character. This woman, still young and beautiful, had known and conversed with Henry IV.

Every one eagerly pressed towards the new-comer, who was greatly in fashion. She was tall, slender, and symmetrical, with a profusion of golden hair, such as Raphael loved, and Titian bestowed on all his Madelines. This tawny or yellow colour, or perhaps that sort of regal pre-eminence which she had acquired over all other women, had caused her to be denominated the Lioness.

Our fair ladies of the present day, who are ambitious of this fashionable title, will thus know that it is derived, not from England, as they may perhaps have imagined, but from their beautiful and talented countrywoman, Mademoiselle Paulet.

Mademoiselle Paulet went straight up to Scarron, in the midst of the universal murmur which her arrival had caused.

"Well, my dear abbé," said she, in her calm and gentle voice, "so you are become a poor man. We heard of it this afternoon at Madame de Rambouillet's. M. de Grasse told it to us."

"Yes, but the state becomes rich," replied Scarron. "One should earn to sacrifice oneself for one's country."

"The cardinal will buy more pomatum and perfumes every year for fifteen hundred livres," said a frondeur, whom Athos at once recognised as the gentleman whom he had met in the rue St. Honore.

"But what will the muse say?" replied Aramis, in his mellifluous voice—"the muse, who requires gilded mediocrity. For, after all—

"Si Virgilio puer aut tolerabile desit
Hospitium, caderent omnes à crinibus hydri."

"Good!" said Scarron, holding his hand out to Mademoiselle Paulet: "but, if I have no longer my hydra, at any rate I have still my Lioness."

Every word which Scarron uttered this evening appeared exquisite. It is the privilege of persecution. M. Ménage was in ecstasies of enthusiasm.

Mademoiselle Paulet took her accustomed place; but before she sat down, she cast, with her lofty grandeur, a regal glance over all the assembly, and her looks became fixed on Raoul.

Athos smiled.

"You have been observed by Mademoiselle Paulet, Raoul. Go and pay your respects to her. Comport yourself as what you are—a frank provincialist; but take care that you do not mention Henry IV."

The viscount went, blushing, towards the Lioness, and was soon lost in the crowd which surrounded her chair. This made two distinct groups—that which surrounded M. Ménage, and that which surrounded Mademoiselle Paulet. Scarron ran from one to the other, steering his moveable chair amid all this crowd with as much skill as the most experienced pilot would direct a barque through a sea covered with rocks.

"When shall we have some conversation together?" said Athos to Aramis.

"Presently," he answered: "there is not yet sufficient company assembled, and we shall be observed."

At this moment the door opened, and the attendant announced M. the Coadjutor.

At this name every one turned round, for it was one which already began to be renowned. Athos did the same, for he only knew the Abbè de Gondy by name. He saw a little dark man, badly made, and near-sighted, extremely awkward with his hands in everything but the use of the sword and pistol, who immediately ran against a table, which he nearly upset, but who, withal, had something haughty and fierce in his countenance.

Scarron turned, and went towards him with his chair. Mademoiselle Paulet bowed, and waved her hand to him from her seat.

"Well," said the coadjutor, on seeing Scarron, which he did not do until he almost ran against him—"so, you are in disgrace, abbé?"

This was the party expression: it had been used a hundred times during the evening; and Scarron had now reached his hundredth bon-mot on the same subject. He was therefore nearly exhausted, but a desperate effort saved him.

"M. le Cardinal Mazarin," said he, "no doubt wished to dream of me."

"Prodigious!" exclaimed Ménage.

"But how will you manage to receive us?" continued the coadjutor. "If your income decreases, I must make you a canon of Notre-Dame."

"Oh, no," said Scarron, "I should compromise you too much."

"Then you have resources unknown to us?"

"I will borrow from the queen."

"But her majesty has nothing of her own," said Aramis: "does she not live under the rule of community of goods?"

The coadjutor turned, and smiled at Aramis, making a friendly sign to him.

"Pardon, my dear abbé," said he to him, "you are late, and I must make you a present."

"Of what?" said Aramis.

"Of a band for your hat."

Every one turned towards the coadjutor, who drew from his pocket a silk band of singular form.

"Ah!" said Scarron, "that is a *fronde!*"

"Exactly so," said the coadjutor; "everything is made *à la fronde.* Mademoiselle Paulet, I have a fan for you, *à la fronde.* I will give you the address of my glover, d'Herblay: he makes gloves *à la fronde.* And of my baker to you, Scarron, with unlimited credit: he makes bread *à la fronde,* which is excellent."

Aramis took the band, and fastened it round his hat.

At this moment the door opened, and the servant cried out, with a loud voice—"Madame la Duchess de Chevreuse."

At the name of Madame de Chevreuse, everybody arose. Scarron directed his chair rapidly towards the door. Raoul blushed; Athos made a sign to Aramis, who went and ensconced himself in the embrasure of the window.

In the midst of the respectful compliments which greeted her entrance, the duchess was evidently looking for some person or thing. At last she discovered Raoul, and her eyes sparkled; she perceived Athos, and became thoughtful; she saw Aramis in the embrasure of the window, and made an imperceptible motion of surprise behind her fan.

"Apropos," she said, as if to drive away the ideas which intruded in spite of all her efforts, "how is poor Voiture?" Do you know, Scarron?"

"What, is M. Voiture ill?" demanded the gentleman who had spoken to Athos in the rue St. Honoré, "and what has he been doing now?"

"He has been playing, without having made his servant bring him a change of linen," said the coadjutor; "so that he has caught cold, and is dangerously ill."

"And where was that?"

"Oh, at my house. You must know that poor Voiture had made a solemn vow not to play any more. At the expiration of three days, he could no longer keep it, and comes to the bishop's palace, that I may release him from his vow. Unfortunately, at that very moment I was engaged on matters of serious consequence with the excellent

Broussel, at the further end of my apartment, when Voiture perceived the Marquis de Luynes seated at a table, waiting for some one to play with him. The marquis calls him, and invites him to sit down at the table; Voiture answers that he cannot play till I have released him from his vow. Luynes answers for me, and takes the sin upon himself; Voiture places himself at the table, and loses four hundred crowns, takes cold on going out, and goes to bed, not to get up again."

"Ah, is he so bad as that—dear Voiture?" demanded Aramis, partially concealed behind the curtain.

"Alas!" replied M. Menage, "he is very ill, and this great man will perhaps leave us—*deseret orbem*."

"Good!" said Mademoiselle Paulet, with considerable acrimony. "He die! He will take care of that! He is surrounded by sultanas like a Turk. Madame Saintot has hastened to him, and gives him broths; la Renaudot warms his sheets; and even our friend the Marchioness de Rambouillet sends him gruel."

"You do not love him, my dear Parthenie," said Scarron, laughing.

"Oh, what injustice! My dear invalid, I hate him so little, that I would with pleasure cause masses to be said for the repose of his soul."

"You are not called Lioness for nothing, my dear," said Madame de Chevreuse, "for you bite very sharply."

"You ill-treat a great poet, it seems to me Madame," hazarded Raoul.

"He a great poet! It is plain enough that you are just come from the country, viscount, as you told me just now, and that you never saw him. He!—a great poet? Why, he is not five feet high."

"Bravo! bravo!" cried a tall, thin, black man, with a proud moustache, and an enormous rapier: "bravo, fair Paulet! It is time, at last, to put that little Voiture into his proper place. I openly declare that I think I know something of poetry, and have always found his detestably bad."

"And who, then, is this captain?" said Raoul to Athos.

"M. de Scudery."

" The author of *Clélie*, and the *Grand Cyrus?*"

" Who at any rate composed it, with the assistance of his sister, who is conversing with that pretty person near M. Scarron."

Raoul turned, and saw two fresh figures, who had just entered—one of them very charming, delicate and melancholy, covered with her profusion of glossy black hair, with eyes as soft as those beautiful violet-coloured flowers of the pansy, with their sparkling gold calyxes—the other female, apparnetly her guardian, was cold, withered, and yellow, the very personification of a genuine duenna or devotee.

Raoul promised to himself not to leave the room without having spoken to the pretty young girl with the soft eyes, who, by a strange freak of his imagination, although she had not the slightest resemblance to her, reminded him of the little Louise, whom he had left ill at the chateau de la Vallière, and whom, in the midst of this brilliant assemblage, he had for a time forgotten.

In the meantime Aramis went up to the coadjutor, who, with a smiling countenance, managed to whisper a few words in his ear. Aramis, in spite of the power he had over himself, could not refrain from slightly starting.

" Laugh, then, will you!" said M. de Gondy: " we are observed;" and he went to talk to Madame de Chevreuse, who was encircled by a vast crowd.

Aramis pretended to laugh, to distract the attention of some curious listeners; and seeing that Athos had retired to the embrasure of the window, he rejoined him without affectation, after having spoken some casual words to those around him.

As soon as they met again, they commenced a conversation, accompanied by most animated gestures.

Raoul then went towards them, as he had been directed by Athos.

" It is one of Voiture's rondeaus which M. l'Abbé is repeating to me," said Athos aloud, " and which I find incomparable."

Raoul remained some moments near them, and then went to mingle with the group that encompassed Madame de Chevreuse, which Mademoiselle Paulet and Mademoiselle Scudery had also joined.

"Well, for my part," said the coadjutor, "I cannot allow myself to be entirely of M. de Scudery's opinion. On the contrary, I think that M. de Voiture is a poet—but a mere poet. He has no political ideas whatever."

"So then?" said Athos.

"It is to-morrow," answered Aramis, hastily.

"At what hour?"

"At six o'clock."

"Where?"

"At St. Maude.'

"Who told you so?"

"The Count de Rochefort."

Some one approached them.

"And as to his philosophical ideas? It was there poor Voiture failed. I am of M. the Coadjutor's opinion—a mere poet."

"Yes, certainly, in poetry he was prodigious," said Ménage. "And yet posterity, even whilst admiring, will lay one fault to his charge, namely, the having given himself too great a license in the composition of his poetry. He has murdered poetry, without knowing it."

"Murdered—that is the word," said Scudery.

"But what master-pieces are his letters," said Madame de Chevreuse.

"Oh, in that respect he is a complete paragon," said Mademoiselle Scudery.

"It is true," said Mademoiselle Paulet; "but merely when he is lively; for he is actually pitiable in his serious epistolary compositions; and if he does not say things bluntly, you must confess that he says them ill."

"But, at any rate, confess that his humour is inimitable."

"Yes, certainly," said Scudery, twisting his moustache: "I only find that his humour is forced, and his pleasantry too familiar. Look at his *Letter from the Carp to the Pike.*"

"Without reckoning," said Ménage, "that his best inspirations come from the hotel de Rambouillet. For instance, his *Zelide* and *Alcidolée.*"

"As for me," said Aramis, joining the circle, and bowing respectfully to Madame de Chevreuse, who answered him by a gracious smile—"as for me, I will also accuse him of being too free with great people. He has often failed in respect towards Madame the Princess, M. le Marechal d'Albert, and M. de Schomberg; nay, even towards the queen herself."

"How! towards the queen?" demanded Scudery, bringing his right leg forward, as if to place himself on guard. "Zounds! I did not know that. And how did he fail in respect towards her majesty?"

"Do you not know his piece, *Je pensais?*"

"No," said Madame de Chevreuse.

"No," said Mademoiselle de Scudery.

"No," said Mademoiselle Paulet.

"In fact," said Aramis, "I believe that the queen communicated it to very few persons; but I have it on the very best authority."

'And do you know it?"

"I believe that I can recollect it."

"Let us have it—let us have it," they all exclaimed.

"You must know the circumstances under which it was produced," said Aramis. "M. de Voiture was in the queen's carriage, who was taking an airing with him *tête-à-tête* in the forest of Fontainebleau. He pretended to be thinking, in order that the queen might ask him what he was thinking of, which she did not fail to do."

"What are you thinking about, M. de Voiture?" said her majesty.

"Voiture smiled, pretended to reflect five seconds, that it might be believed he composed extempore, and answered—

"—Je pensais que la destinée,
Après tant d'injustes malheurs,
Vous a justement couronnée
De gloire, d'éclat et d'honneurs;
Mais que vous étiez plus heureuse
Lorsque vous étiez autrefois,

Je ne dirai pas amoureuse—
La rime le veut toutefois."

Scudery, Ménage, and Mademoiselle Paulet shrugged their shoulders.

"Wait, wait," said Aramis, "there are three stanzas."

"Oh, say three couplets," cried Mademoiselle de Scudery, "it is neither more nor less than a ballad."

"—Je pensais que ce pauvre Amour,
Qui toujours vous prêta ses armes,
Est banni loin de votre cour,
Sans ses traits, son arc et ses charmes:
Et de quoi je puis profiter
En passant près de vous, Marie,
Si vous pouvez si maltraiter
Ceux qui vous ont si bien servie."

"Oh! as to this last passage," said Madame de Chevreuse, "I do not know whether it is according to the rules of poetry, but I ask for your indulgence towards him because it is true; and Madame de Hautefort and Madame de Senecey will unite with me, should it be necessary, without reckoning M. de Beaufort."

"Proceed, proceed," said Scarron; "it is of no consequence to me now. From this morning, I am no longer the queen's invalid."

"The last couplet," said Madame de Scudery—"the last couplet!"

"Here it is," said Aramis, "and it has the advantage of using proper names, so that there can be no possibility of mistake."

—"Je pensais, nous autres poëtes
Nous pensons extravgamment.
Ce que dans l'humeur où vous êtes
Vous feriez si dans ce moment
Vous avisiez en cette place
Venir le Duc de Buckingham,
Et lequel serait en disgrâce
Et duc où du père Vincent." *

* Père Vincent was the queen's confessor.

At this last stanza there was but one exclamation at Voiture's impertinence.

"But," said the young lady with the soft eyes, in a low voice—"but I am unfortunate enough to think these verses quite charming."

This was also the opinion of Raoul, who, going up to Scarron, said with a blush—"M. Scarron, will you be so obliging as to tell me who that young lady is, who is single in her opinion against all this illustrious assembly?"

"Aha, my young viscount," said Scarron, "I believe that you wish to propose an alliance, offensive and defensive, with her."

Raoul coloured again. "I confess," said he, "that I think the verses very pretty."

"And they really are so," said Scarron. "But hush! Amongst poets we must not talk in this manner."

"But I," said Raoul, "have not the honour of being a poet, and I asked you"—

"Ah, true—who that young lady was? It is the fair Indian."

"Will you excuse me, sir," said Raoul, "but I am not wiser than before. Alas! I am a provincialist."

"Which means that you do not very well understand the bombast that here flows from every mouth. So much the better, young man—so much the better. Do not try to understand it: you will only lose your time; and, when you have become capable of understanding it, it is to be hoped that it will no longer be spoken."

"Therefore you will pardon me, sir," replied Raoul, "and you will also deign to inform me who it is whom you call the fair Indian."

"Yes, certainly. She is one of the most charming persons in the world—Mademoiselle Françoise d'Aubigné."

"Is she of the family of the famous Agrippa, the friend of Henry IV.?"

"She is his grand-daughter, and is just come from Martinique; which is the reason of my calling her the fair Indian."

Raoul opened his eyes wide, and they met those of the young lady, who smiled.

She continued talking of Voiture. "Sir," said Mademoiselle d'Aubigné, addressing Scarron, that she might join in the conversation which he held with the young viscount, "do you not admire the friends of poor Voiture? Only hear how they are plucking him, in the midst of their commendations. One takes from him good sense, another poetry, another originality, another humour, another independence, another——but, good God! what will they leave him, (this complete paragon,) as Mademoiselle Scudery said."

Scarron and Raoul began to laugh. The fair Indian, astonished at the effect she had produced, lowered her eyes, and resumed her simple air.

"She has great talent," said Raoul to himself.

Athos, still in the embrasure of the window, overlooked all this scene, with a disdainful smile upon his lips.

"Call M. le Count de la Fère to me," said Madame de Chevreuse to the coadjutor. "I want to speak to him."

"And I," said the coadjutor, "want it to be believed that I never spoke to him. I esteem and admire him—for I know his ancient adventures, at least some of them—but I do not wish to address him until after to-morrow morning."

"And why after to-morrow morning?" demanded Madame de Chevreuse.

"You will know that to-morrow evening," said the coadjutor, laughing.

"Really, my dear Gondy," said the duchess, "you speak in riddles. M. d'Herblay," she added, turning towards Aramis, "will you this evening once more become my servant?"

"What do you mean duchess?" said Aramis: "this evening—to-morrow—for ever!—command me."

"Well then, go and find M. le Count de la Fère for me. I want to speak to him."

"Aramis went to Athos, and returned with him.

"Count," said the duchess, giving Athos a letter, "here is what I promised you. Our protegé will be received most favourably."

"Madame," said Athos, "he is most fortunate in being indebted to you for anything."

"You have nothing for which to envy him in that respect; for I am indebted to you for having ever known him," said the sly creature, with a smile that reminded Aramis and Athos of Mary Michon.

And saying this, she arose, and ordered her carriage.

Mademoiselle Paulet was already gone, and Mademoiselle Scudery just going.

"Viscount," said Athos to Raoul, "follow Madame de Chevreuse, request her to do you the favour to take your hand to lead her down stairs, and, in going down, thank her."

The fair Indian went to take leave of Scarron.

"Are you going so soon?" said he.

"I am one of the last, as you may perceive. If you hear any news of M. Voiture, particularly if it be good, do me the favour to send it to me to-morrow."

"Oh," said Scarron, "now he may die."

"And why so?" inquired the young lady with the soft eyes.

"Because his panegyric has been made."

And they separated with smiles; the young girl turning, and looking with interest at the poor paralytic; and the poor paralytic following her with eyes of love.

Gradually the groups dispersed. Scarron pretended not to see that certain of his guests had conversed mysteriously together, that letters had been brought to many persons, and that the soirée appeared to have a mysterious purpose, far removed from literature, about which they had, nevertheless, made such a great fuss. But what did it signify to Scarron? Since the morning, as he had said, he was no longer the queen's invalid.

As for Raoul, he had attended the duchess to her carriage, where she had taken her seat, giving him her hand to kiss. Then, by one of those giddy caprices which made her so adorable, and at the same time so dangerous, she had suddenly seized him by the head, and kissed his forehead, saying—

Viscount, may my prayers, and this kiss, bring you good fortune."

Then she pushed him back, telling her coachman to drive to the hotel de Luynes. The carriage went off, Madame de Chevreuse giving a farewell wave of the hand to the young man, who returned to the saloon in utter confusion.

Athos understood all that had passed, and smiled.

"Come, viscount," said he, "it is time for you to retire. To-morrow you depart for the army of M. le Prince. Therefore sleep well, on this your last night as a citizen."

"I shall then be a soldier," said the young man. "Oh, sir, I thank you with all my heart."

"Adieu, count," said the Abbé d'Herblay, "I am going to my convent."

"Adieu, abbé," said the coadjutor: "I am to preach to-morrow, and I have twenty texts to consult this evening."

"Adieu, gentlemen," said the count, "I am going to sleep a good four-and-twenty hours, for I am overwhelmed with fatigue."

The three men bowed and departed, after having exchanged a look.

Scarron followed them, with a glance from the corner of his eye, through the door of his saloon.

"Not one of them will do what he has said," murmured he, with his apish smile. "But let them go: they are brave gentlemen. Who knows but what they are now labouring to make them restore my pension. They can move their arms—that is a great thing. Alas! I have only my tongue; but I will endeavour to prove that that is something. Halloo! Champenois, it is now striking eleven: come and wheel me to my bed. Really that Mademoiselle d'Aubigné is a charming creature!"

Upon this the poor paralytic disappeared in his bed-chamber, the door of which closed behind him; and one by one the lights were extinguished in the saloon of the rue des Tournelles.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SAINT DENIS.

At daybreak Athos arose and dressed himself. It was very perceptible, by his more than usual paleness, and by the traces which want of sleep leaves upon the countenance, that he had passed almost a sleepless night. Contrary to the habitual and peculiar firmness and decision of this man, there was this morning something slow and irresolute in his whole appearance.

It was, that he was engaged in preparations for Raoul's departure, and endeavoured to gain time. First, he himself furbished up a sword which he drew from a scabbard of perfumed leather, examined if the handle was well on guard, and if the blade was firmly fixed to the handle. Then he threw a small bag full of louis into the young man's valise, called Olivain (which was the name of the lacquey who had followed them from Bolis), made him pack the portmanteau before him, seeing that everything necessary for a young man going a campaign was placed within it. At last, having employed nearly an hour on all these cares, he opened the door of the viscount's chamber, and softly entered it.

The sun, already radiant, penetrated into the apartment through the large window-panes, of which Raoul, having come in late, had forgotten to close the shutters. He yet slept, his head gracefully resting on his arm. His long black hair half concealed his polished forehead, covered with that moisture indicative of fatigue in youth.

Athos approached, and bending over him in an attitude full of melancholy tenderness, for a long time looked at the youth, thus reposing with a smile on his lips, and half-closed lids, whose dreams ought to be soft, and slumber light, so much of mute anxiety and affection did his guardian angel infuse into his regard. Athos allowed himself to be gradually carried away by the fascinations of thought, in the presence of youth so pure and exuberant. His own youth came back to him, bringing with it all those sweet recollections which are rather perfumes than thoughts. From that past to the

present, there was an abyss. But imagination has the wing of an angel and of the lightning: she towers over seas where we have escaped shipwreck, over the darkness in which our illusions have vanished, and over the precipices where our happiness has been shattered. He remembered that all the first part of his life had been destroyed by a woman; and he thought with terror what influence love might excite over an organization so delicate, and at the same time so vigorous.

By recalling all that he had himself suffered, he foresaw all that Raoul might endure; and the expression of profound and tender pity that passed through his heart, impressed itself on the tearful look with which he regarded the young man.

At this moment Raoul roused himself from his dreams, his features cloudless, and animated in a manner peculiar to some constitutions, delicate as those of birds. His eyes were fixed on those of Athos, and doubtless he understood all that passed in the heart of that man, who thus awaited his waking as a lover awaits that of his mistress; for his look assumed an expression of intense affection.

"Are you there, sir?" said he, respectfully

"Yes, Raoul, I have been here some time," replied Athos.

"And you did not awake me!"

"I wished to leave you some few moments more of that excellent sleep, my friend. You must have been fatigued by our long day yesterday, which was even prolonged to a late hour in the night."

"Oh, sir, how good you are," exclaimed Raoul.

Athos smiled. "How do you feel?" said he.

"Oh, perfectly well, sir; completely refreshed, and as active as ever."

"You know that you are still growing," continued Athos, with the paternal and charming interest of the mature for the young man, "and that fatigue has a double effect at your age."

"Oh, sir," replied Raoul, quite ashamed of so much consideration for him, "pardon me, and I will be dressed in a moment."

Athos called Olivain, and, in reality, in ten minutes, with that military punctuality which Athos had transmitted to his pupil, the young man was ready.

"Now," said the youth to the lacquey, "employ yourself about my baggage."

"Your baggage awaits you, Raoul," said Athos; "I had the valise packed under my own inspection, and everything you want is prepared. It must be already placed on your horse, if the lacquey has obeyed my orders."

"Everything has been done according to the count's wishes," said Olivain, "and the horses are waiting."

"And I was asleep," exclaimed Raoul, "whilst you, sir, had the goodness to occupy yourself with all these details. Really, sir, you overwhelm me with your kindness."

"And therefore you have some slight affection for me—at least I hope so?" replied Athos, in a tone of considerable emotion.

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed Raoul, who, that he might not betray his feelings by any ebullition of tenderness, had struggled with himself almost to suffocation—"oh! God is my witness that I love and venerate you."

"Let us see that you forget nothing," said Athos, pretending to look around to conceal his emotion

"Oh, no, sir," replied Raoul.

The lacquey then came up to Athos with some hesitation, and said to him in a low voice—"Sir, the viscount has no sword, for you made me take that away which he wore last evening."

"Very well," replied Athos, "I will take care of that."

Raoul did not appear to notice this conversation. He went down stairs, looking every instant at the count under the expectation of his saying farewell. But Athos did not do so.

On reaching the steps, Raoul saw three horsess. "Oh, sir," said he, quite overjoyed, "you will accompany me then?"

"I wish to attend you a little way," replied Athos.

Joy shone in Raoul's eyes, as he threw himself lightly on his horse.

Athos mounted his slowly, after having said something in a low voice to the lacquey, who returned into the house. Raoul, enchanted at being in the count's company, either did not perceive, or pretended not to perceive, anything of this.

The two gentlemen went by the Pont-Neuf, followed the quays, or rather what was then called the watering-place of Pepin, and skirted along the walls of the Grand-Chatelet. They had entered the rue St. Denis, when they were overtaken by the lacquey. They proceeded in silence. Raoul saw that the time of separation was approaching. The count had, the evening before, given different directions with regard to his journey. Besides, his looks redoubled in tenderness, and the few words that escaped him evinced increased affection. From time to time, a reflection, or a piece of advice, dropped from his lips, and his words were replete with anxious solicitude.

After having passed the gate of St. Denis, and when the two cavaliers had reached the heights of Récollets, Athos cast his eyes on the viscount's horse.

"Take care, Raoul," said he: "you have too heavy a hand on your horse. I have often told you so. You must not forget it, for it is a great fault in a horseman. See, your horse is already fatigued: he foams at the mouth; whilst mine appears as if he were just come out of the stable. You harden his mouth by thus always bearing on the bit. And observe, that you cannot in this way make him manœuvre with the necessary rapidity. The safety of a cavalier very often depends upon the prompt obedience of his horse. Remember, that, in a week hence, you will no longer manœuvre in the riding-school, but on the field of battle."

Then suddenly, not to appear to give too grave an importance to this observation, Athos continued—"Look, Raoul, what a fine plain to fly at a partridge."

The young man profited by the lesson, and, more than all, admired the affectionate delicacy with which it was given.

"I also remarked one thing the other day," said Athos, "that, in shooting with the pistol, you extended your arm too much. This destroys the correctness of your aim: therefore, in twelve shots, you missed the butt three times."

"Whilst you hit every time, sir," replied Raoul, smiling.

"Because I bent my arm, and kept my hand supported by my elbow. Do you perfectly understand what I mean, Raoul?"

"Yes, sir. I shot alone since that: I followed your directions, and was completely successful."

"Observe also," said Athos, that, in fencing, you attack your adversary too much. I know very well that it is the fault of your age; but the motion of the body in attacking, turns the sword from the direct line; and, if you were engaged with a cool hand, he would stop you at the first pass, either by a simple parry, or a direct thrust."

"Yes, sir, as you have often done; but it is not every one that possesses your skill and courage."

"How sharp the wind is," said Athos: "it is a memorial of the winter. Apropos! if you get under fire—and you will do so, for you are recommended to a young general who is very fond of the smell of powder—remember that, in a personal conflict, which often happens, particularly amongst us cavaliers—remember well that you should never fire first: he who fires first seldom touches his man; for he fires wtih the dread of remaining unarmed before an armed enemy. Then, when he fires, make your horse rear. This mnnœuvre has saved my life two or three times."

"I will make use of it, were it only from gratitude."

"Ah!" said Athos, "are not those poachers who are being taken down there? Yes, they really are. And then, a very important thing, Raoul: should you be wounded in a charge, and fall from your horse, if you have sufficient strength left, remove yourself from the line followed by your regiment; otherwise it may be driven back, and you would be trodden under foot by the horses. At all events, should you be wounded, write to me immediately, or make some one write. We have some knowledge of wounds," he added, sighing.

"Thank you, sir," exclaimed the young man, with great emotion.

"Ah! here we are at St. Denis," murmured Athos.

In fact, they had just reached the gate of the town, which was guarded by two sentinels. One of them said to the other—

"Ah! here is another young gentleman, who appears to be going to join the army."

Athos turned round. Everything, referring even indirectly to Raoul, assumed an importance in his eyes. "How can you tell that?" said he.

"By his air, sir," said the sentinel. "Besides, he is just the age. He is the second this morning."

"What, has another young man passed through this morning, like myself?" demanded Raoul.

"Yes, faith he has, and of a haughty air; and with a handsome equipage. He looked to me like the son of some high family."

"He will be a companion for me on my journey, sir," replied Raoul; "but, alas! he will not make me forget what I lose."

"I do not think that you can overtake him, Raoul; for I have something to say to you here, and it may occupy sufficient time to enable this gentleman to get a long way before you."

"As you please, sir."

Whilst thus conversing, they traversed the streets, which were very full, on account of the solemnity of the feast, and came opposite the old church, in which they were then saying a first mass.

"Let us dismount, Raoul," said Athos; "and you Olivain, take care of the horses, and give me the sword."

Athos took the sword in his hand, and the two gentlemen entered the church. Athos presented the holy water to Raoul. The hearts of some fathers are gifted with the same provident affection which a lover feels for his mistress.* The young man touched Athos's hand, bowed, and crossed himself.

Athos said something to one of the vergers, who bowed and went towards the vaults.

"Come, Raoul," said Athos, "let us follow this man."

The verger opened the grated door of the royal tombs, and remained at the top of the stairs, whilst Athos and Raoul descended them. The profundity of this sepulchral staircase was enlightened by one solitary silver lamp, which was burning on the lowest step; and exactly underneath this lamp, rested a coffin, supported on oak

* A complete French idea—always love.—TRANSLATOR.

trestles, covered by a large mantle of violet-coloured velvet, sprinkled with golden fleurs-de-lis.

The youth, prepared for such a scene by the state of his own heart, then filled with sadness, and by the awful majesty of the church he had just passed through, had descended the stairs with a slow and solemn step, and remained standing, with head uncovered before the mortal remains of the last king, who was not to rejoin his ancestors until his successor came to rejoin him, and who appeared to remain there merely to say to human pride, so prone to exalt itself on a throne—"Earthly dust, I wait for thee!"

There was a moment's silence. Then Athos raised his hand, and pointing to the coffin,

"This imperfect sepulture," said he, "is that of a man, who was feeble and without grandeur, and who had yet a reign replete with extraordinary events. It was because the mind of another hovered over that king, as that lamp does over his coffin, and illumines it. That other was the real king, Raoul: this was only a shadow, into which he infused his soul. And yet, so powerful is the monarchical dignity with us, that that man has not even the honour of a tomb at the foot of him for whose glory he sacrificed his whole life. For that man, Raoul—and remember this—if he degraded the king, yet elevated royalty: and there are two things enclosed in the walls of the Louvre—the king, who dies; and royalty, which never dies. That reign has passed away, Raoul. The minister so redoubted, so much feared, and so much hated by his master, has descended to the tomb, drawing after him the king, whom he did not wish to leave alone, for fear, no doubt, of his destroying his work: for a king, not sustained by God or the spirit of God, is utterly valueless. But then, every one looked upon the cardinal's death as a deliverance; and I myself, so blind are contemporaries, often openly opposed the designs of that great man, who held France within his grasp, and who, as he tightened or relaxed it, smothered her, or gave her air, at his will. If he did nor crush me and my friends in his wrath, it was doubtless that I might this day say—Raoul, learn to distinguish between the king and royalty. The king is only a man; royalty is the spirit of God. When you have any doubt whom you should serve, abandon

the material appearance for the invisible principle. For the invisible principle is everything. God has willed to make this principle palpable, by embodying it in a man. Raoul, I fancy that I can discover your futurity as through a cloud. It is better than ours, I think. In direct opposition to us, who had a minister without a king, you will have a king without a minister. You may therefore serve, honour, and respect the king. Should this king become a tyrant—for unlimited power has its intoxication, which impels it on to tyranny—yet serve, love, and respect royalty. That is the infallible principle—that is the spirit of God on earth—that is that heavenly spark that makes the dust so great and so sacred, that we, gentlemen of high birth though we are, are as insignificant before that body stretched on the last step of this staircase, as that body itself is before the throne of our Saviour."

"I will worship God, sir," said Raoul; "I will respect royalty; I will serve the king; and I will endeavour, if I die, that it may be for the king, for royalty, or for God. Have I rightly understood you?"

Athos smiled. "You have a noble disposition," said he. "See, here is your sword."

Raoul bent his knee to the ground.

"It was borne by my father, a loyal gentleman. I afterwards carried it; and I sometimes did it no discredit when its hilt was in my hand, and its sheath was hanging by my side. If your hand is yet too weak to wield this sword, Raoul, so much the better: you will have more time to learn, never to draw it but when it ought to see the light."

"Sir," said Raoul, as he received the sword from the count's hand, "I owe everything to you; and yet this sword is the most precious gift that you ever made me. I will bear it, believe me, as a grateful man."

And he put his lips to the hilt, which he kissed respectfully.

"It is well," said Athos. "Rise, viscount, and let us embrace."

Raoul arose, and threw himself, with an overflowing heart, into Athos's arms.

"Adieu!" murmured the count, who felt his heart melting within him: "adieu, and think of me!"

"Oh, yes, for ever, for ever!" exclaimed the young man. "Oh, yes, I swear it, sir; and should any misfortune befal me, your name shall be the last that I will pronounce—my last thought shall be of you."

Athos mounted the steps hastily to conceal his emotion, gave a piece of gold to the verger, bowed to the altar, and with rapid steps gained the church porch, at the bottom of which Olivain was waiting with the horses.

"Olivain," said he, pointing to Raoul's belt, "tighten the buckle of that sword, which hangs too low. Very well. Now, you will accompany the viscount till Grimaud has joined him. When that is the case, you will quit the viscount. Do you understand, Raoul? Grimaud is an old servant, most courageous and prudent —Grimaud will serve you."

"Yes, sir," said Raoul.

"Now to horse, that I may see you depart."

Raoul obeyed.

"Adieu, Raoul," said the count—"adieu, my dear boy!

"Adieu, sir," said Raoul—"adieu, my most loved protector!"

Athos waved his hand, for he dared not speak; and Raoul departed, with head uncovered.

Athos remained motionless, looking at his retreating figure until it disappeared round the corner of the street. Then he gave the bridle of his horse to a peasant, slowly remounted the steps, re-entered the church, went and knelt down in the darkest corner, and prayed.

CHAPTER XXV.

ONE OF M. DE BEAUFORT'S FORTY METHODS OF ESCAPE.

In the meanwhile time flowed on, for the prisoner, as well as for those who were busying themselves about his escape, only it passed on to him with a slower current. Unlike some men, who eagerly undertake a perilous adventure, and grow cold as the moment of execution approaches, the Duke of Beaufort, whose boiling courage was proverbial, and who had been chained down to inaction for five years—the Duke of Beaufort seemed even to urge time itself forward, and to fix all his thoughts and all his aspirations on the moment for action. There was in his escape alone, separated from the future projects which he cherished, (which projects, however, it must be confessed, were still sufficiently vague,) a foretaste of vengeance which made his heart dilate. In the first place, his escape would be a sad blow upon M. de Chavigny, whom he hated for the petty persecutions he had inflicted on him; and then it would be worse still for Mazarin, whom he actually execrated. It is perceptible that M. de Beaufort regulated his sentiments, so that they might keep their proper proportions: his hatred to the governor was subordinate to that he entertained towards his master.

Then M. de Beaufort, who had such a complete knowledge of the interior of the Palais Royal, and was not ignorant of the connexion between the cardinal and the queen, pictured to himself, even in his prison, the dramatic commotion which was about to be excited when the cry resounded from the chamber of the cardinal to that of the queen, of "M. de Beaufort has escaped!" Whilst saying all this to himself, M. de Beaufort smiled, already fancied himself breathing the free air of the plains and the forests, grasping a vigorous horse between his legs, and exclaiming, with a loud voice, "I am free!"

It is true, that, on waking from such day-dreams, he found himself between his four walls; saw la Ramée, at ten paces distance from him, twirling his thumbs as usual; and, in the antechamber, his eight guards, either laughing or drinking. The only thing which

refreshed him in this odious picture, so great is the instability of the human mind, was the sour countenance of Grimaud—that countenance which he had at first hated so much, and which had now become his only hope. Grimaud seemed to him an Antinoüs.

It is unnecessary to say, that all this was a play of the prisoner's excited imagination. Grimaud was still the same: he had therefore retained the confidence of la Ramée, his superior, who now would trust to him just as willingly as to himself; for we have said that la Ramée felt, at his heart, a certain weak partiality for M. de Beaufort.

Therefore the good la Ramée made a sort of fete of this little *tête-à-tête* supper with his prisoner. La Ramée had but one fault—he was a gourmand; and he had found the pasties good, the wine excellent. Now, the successor of Father Marteau had promised him a pasty of pheasant, instead of chicken, and vin de Chambertin instead of vin de Mâcon. All this, set off by the presence of that excellent prince, who was fundamentally so good, who invented such droll tricks against M. de Chavigny, and such capital jokes against Mazarin, caused the approaching Pentecost to be one of the four great fetes of the year to the worthy la Raéme.

La Ramée therefore longed for six o'clock in the evening, as inpatiently as the duke. Since the morning he had been engaged in all the preparations, and trusting to no one but himself, had paid a visit to Father Marteau's successor. He had even surpassed himself: he showed him a regular monster pasty, adorned on the top with the Duke of Beaufort's arms. It was yet empty, but by its side was a pheasant and two partridges, so delicately trussed, (or larded) that they looked like a pincushion. La Ramée's mouth had watered, and he entered the duke's apartment rubbing his hands.

To complete his happiness, M. de Chavigny, having, as we have said, entire confidence in la Ramée, was gone on a short journey. He had set out that very morning, which at once constituted la Ramée the deputy governor of the chateau.

As for Grimaud, he appeared more surly than ever.

In the morning, M. de Beaufort had played at ball with la Ramée.

A sign from Grimaud had made him comprehend that he was to pay attention to everything.

Grimaud, walking in front, traced the road they were to follow in the evening. The game was in what was called the enclosure of the little court of the chateau. It was a very solitary spot, where sentinels were not placed, except when M. de Beaufort was playing; and, from the height of the wall, even this precaution seemed superfluous.

There were three doors to open before reaching this enclosure. Each was opened with a different key, which keys la Ramée carried.

On reaching the enclosure, Grimaud seated himself mechanically near a loop-hole, with his legs hanging outside the wall. It was evident, therefore, that the rope-ladder was to be suspended from this place.

All these manœuvres, well understood by the duke, were quite unintelligible to la Ramée.

The game began. This time, M. de Beaufort was in good cue, and sent the balls wherever he liked. La Ramée was completely beaten.

Four of M. de Beaufort's guards had followed him, and picked up the balls. The game being finished, the duke, whilst laughing at la Ramée for his bad play, offered the guards two louis, to go and drink his health with their comrades.

The guards demanded la Ramée's permission, which he granted, but not until the evening. Up to the very time, la Ramée had to attend to these important preparations; and, as he had to go out, he wished that they should not lose sight of the prisoner during his absence. Had M. de Beaufort arranged everything himself, he probably would not have done it so completely to his satisfaction and convenience, as his gaoler had done.

At last it struck six. Although they were not to sup till seven, everything was served and ready. On a sideboard was the gigantic pasty, with the duke's arms, and appearing to be cooked to perfection, as far as could be judged from the golden colour which illumined its crust. The rest of the supper was in beautiful proportion.

Everybody was impatient—the guards to go and drink, la Ramee to place himself at table, and M. de Beaufort to escape.

Grimaud alone was perfectly imperturbable. It might have been imagined that Athos had trained him, solely from prescience of this important circumstance. There were moments, when, on looking at him, M. de Beaufort asked himself whether it were not a dream, and whether this marble figure were really at his command, and would animate itself at the critical moment.

La Ramée dismissed the guards, with orders to drink the prince's health. Then, when they were gone, he shut the doors, put the keys in his pocket, and pointed to the table in a manner which most eloquently expressed—"When his excellence shall please."

The prince looked at Grimaud, and Grimaud looked at the clock. It was scarcely a quarter past six; the escape was fixed for seven o'clock. There was therefore still upwards of quarters of an hour to wait.

The prince, to gain a quarter of an hour, pretended to want to finish a chapter which he was reading, and which greatly interested him. La Ramée went up to him, and looked over his shoulder, to see what book could have such extraordinary influence over the prince, as to prevent his placing himself at table when the supper was served. It was "Cæsar's Commentaries," which he himself had procured for him three days before, contrary to M. de Chavigny's orders.

La Ramée made a secret resolve, never again thus to contravene the rules of the prison. In the meantime, he uncorked the bottles, and took a smell at the pasty.

At half-past six the duke arose, and said, with the utmost gravity, "Cæsar was decidedly the greatest man of ancient times."

"Do you think so, your excellence?" said la Ramée.

"Yes."

"Well, now, I prefer Hannibal," replied la Ramée.

"And why so, Master la Ramee?" inquired the duke.

"Because he did not leave any Commentaries," said la Ramée, with his horse-laugh.

The duke understood the hint, and placed himself at table,

making a sign for la Ramée to take the opposite seat. The officer did not require a repetition of the invitation.

There is no countenance more expressive than that of a genuine gourmand, who finds himself at a good table. Therefore, on receiving his plate of soup from Grimaud, la Ramée's face bore an expression of most perfect felicity.

The duke looked at him with a smile. "Ventre St. Gris! la Ramée," he exclaimed, "do you know that if any one were to tell me that there is, at this moment, a man in France happier than you are, I would not believe him."

"And, faith, you would be right, your excellence," answered la Ramée. "As for me, I confess that, when I am hungry, I know not a more agreeable sight than that of a well-covered table. And if you add," continued la Ramée, "that he who presides at that table is the grandson of Henry the Great, then your excellence will understand, that the honour received doubles the pleasure I experience."

The prince bowed in turn, and an imperceptible smile appeared on Grimaud's countenance, who was standing behind la Ramée.

"My dear la Ramée," said the duke, "no one can turn a compliment like yourself."

"Nay, your excellence," said la Ramée, in the exuberance of his feelings, "nay, really I say what I think: there is nothing complimentary in my words."

"Then you are really attached to me?" demanded the duke.

"I can only say that I should be inconsolable if your highness were to leave Vincennes," replied la Ramee.

"A droll manner of testifying your *affliction* for me."

The prince meant to say affection.

"But your excellence," said la Ramée, "what would you do if you were out? Some folly, which would embroil you with the court, would cause you to be put into the Bastile, instead of Vincennes! M. de Chavigny is not an amiable man, I confess," continued la Ramee, sipping a glass of Madeira, "but M. de Tremblay is much worse."

"Really!" said the duke, who was greatly amused at the turn

the conversation was taking, and who from time to time kept looking at the clock, of which the minute hand appeared to be desperately lazy in its motions.

"But what could you expect from the brother of a capucin, brought up at the school of Cardinal Richelieu?" continued la Ramée. "Ah! your excellence, believe me, that it is a most fortunate thing, that the queen, who, as I have heard say, has always wished you well, thought of sending you here, where there is a promenade, a tennis-ground, a good table, and excellent air."

"Really, to hear you, la Ramée," said the duke, "I must be an ungrateful fellow, ever to have thought of leaving the place."

"Oh, your excellence, it is the height of ingratitude," replied la Ramée; "but your highness never can have seriously thought of it."

"Yes," replied the duke, "and I must confess, it may perhaps be foolish. I do not say that it is not so; but from time to time I think of it, even now,"

"And always by one of your forty methods, your excellence?"

"Why, yes," replied the duke.

"Your excellence, as we are opening our hearts," said la Ramée, "tell me one of those forty methods which your highness has invented."

"Most willingly," said the duke. "Grimaud, give me the pasty."

"I am all attention," said la Ramée, throwing himself back in his chair, raising his glass, and, with one eye shut, looking at the sun through the ruby-coloured liquid it contained.

The duke cast a glance at the clock: it wanted only ten minutes to seven.

Grimaud placed the pasty before the duke, who took his knife with the silver blade to remove the covering; but la Ramée, who feared that some misfortune might happen to this beautiful fabric, passed his own knife, which had an iron blade, across to the duke.

"Thank you, la Ramée," said the duke, taking the knife.

"Well, your excellence," said the officer, "now for your famous method."

"Must I tell you," replied the duke, "that upon which I depended the most—that which I had resolved to employ the first?"

"Oh, yes! that by all means," said la Ramée.

"Well then," said the duke, digging into the pasty with one hand, and describing circles with his knife with the other, "in the first place I hoped to have such a brave fellow as you are, la Ramée, for my gaoler."

"Good!" said la Ramée; "you have him, your excellence. And what then?"

And I congratulate myself upon it."

La Ramée bowed.

"I said to myself," continued the prince, "if ever I have near me a good fellow like la Ramée, I will try and recommend to him, by some friend of mine with whom he knows not that I am connected, a man completely devoted to me, with whom I may consult about some means of escape."

"Come, come," said la Ramée, "that is not a bad idea."

"No, it is not, is it?" replied the duke. "For instance, the servant of some brave gentleman, himself an enemy to Mazarin, as every gentleman ought to be."

"Hush! your excellence," said la Ramée, "let us not talk politics."

"When I have got this man near me," continued the duke, "if he be sufficiently skilful to inspire the confidence of his superior, who should consequently trust him, I shall then have the means of procuring intelligence from without."

"Ah, yes," said la Ramée, "but *how* can you gain this intelligence from without?"

"Oh, nothing can be more easy," replied the Duke of Beaufort: "in playing with the balls, for example."

"In playing with the balls?" said la Ramée, beginning to pay the most intense attention to the duke's words.

"Yes. Observe now: I send a ball into the trench; a man is there, who picks it up; that ball contains a letter; instead of throwing me back the ball I asked for, he sends me back another;

this other ball contains a letter;—and thus we have exchanged our ideas, and no one knows anything about it."

"The devil! the devil!" said la Ramée, scratching his ear: "you do well to tell me this, your excellence. I will look to these ball-pickers."

The duke smiled.

"But," continued la Ramée, "all this, after all, is only a mode of correspondence."

"But that is a good deal, I think," replied the duke.

"But not enough," said la Ramée.

"I beg your pardon. For example, I say to my friends—'On such a day, at such an hour, you must be on the other side of the trench, with two led horses.'"

"Well, and what then?" said la Ramée, with some uneasiness; "unless, indeed, these horses have wings, so as to mount the rampart, and come for you."

"Oh, my God," said the duke, carelessly, "there is no necessity that the horses should have wings to mount the rampart, but merely that I myself should have some means of descending it."

"And what are these means?"

"A rope-ladder."

"Yes," said la Ramée, "but a rope-ladder cannot be conveyed in a ball, like a letter."

"No; but it may be sent in something else."

"In something else—in something else! And in what?" said la Ramée.

"In a pasty, for example."

"In a pasty!" exclaimed la Ramée.

"Yes. Let us suppose one thing," replied the duke—"let us suppose, for instance, that my house-steward, Noirmont, had bought Father Marteau's shop—"

"Well, and then?" said la Ramée, shuddering

"Well, la Ramée, who is a gourmand sees his pasties, finds that they have a better appearance than those of his predecessor, and comes and offers to let me taste them. I agree to it, on condition that la Ramée tastes them with me. To be more com-

pletely at his ease, la Ramée dismisses the guards, and only keeps Grimaud to wait upon us. Grimaud is the man sent me by my friend—that servant with whom I secretly plot, and who is ready to second me in everything. The moment for flight is fixed at seven o'clock. Well, at a few minutes before seven—"

"At a few minutes before seven?" gasped la Ramée, from whose forehead the perspiration began to trickle.

"At a few minutes before seven," continued the duke, suiting the action to the words, "I take off the crust from the pasty; and in it I find two daggers, a rope-ladder, and a gag. I clap one of these daggers to la Ramée's breast, and I say to him —'My friend, I am inexpressibly sorry for it, but if you move, or say one word, you are a dead man.'"

We have said that, on pronouncing these last words, the duke suited the action to them. The duke was standing near him, and was holding the point of the dagger to his breast, in a manner that left no doubt of his intentions.

In the meantime Grimaud, as silent as ever, drew the second dagger, the rope-ladder, and the chokepear from the pasty.

La Ramée perceived each of these objects with looks of increased terror.

"Oh, your excellence," he exclaimed, looking at the duke in such utter stupefaction, as at any other time would have made him roar with laughter—"you will not have the heart to kill me!"

"Not unless you oppose my flight."

"But, your excellence if I let you escape, I am a ruined man."

"I will make you compensation for the loss of your situation."

"And you are really determined to quit the chateau?"

"A pretty question, truly!"

"Nothing that I can say will make you change your resolution?"

"This evening I must be free."

"And if I resist—if I call, or cry out?"

"By the word of a gentleman, I will kill you."

At this moment the clock struck.

"Seven o'clock!" said Grimaud, who had not yet spoken a word.

"Seven o'clock," repeated the duke: "you see that I am late."

La Ramée made a motion, to satisfy his conscience.

The duke frowned, and the officer felt the point of the dagger, which, after having penetrated his dress, was just going to pierce his breast.

"Well, your excellence," said he, "that is quite sufficient: I will not stir."

"We must make haste," said the duke.

"A last favour, your excellence?"

"What is it? Speak—be quick!"

"Bind me, your excellence."

"And why?"

"That I may not be considered your accomplice."

"Your hands!" said Grimaud to him.

"Not before—behind now, behind."

"But with what?" said the duke.

"With your girdle, your excellence," replied la Ramée.

The duke took off his belt, and gave it to Grimaud, who bound his hands in a most satisfactory manner

"Your feet!" said Grimaud.

La Ramée stretched out his legs: Grimaud took a napkin, tore it into strips, and bound la Ramée.

"Now, my sword," said la Ramée—"tie up the hilt of my sword."

The duke tore off one of the ribands from his breeches, and performed his gaoler's wish.

"Now," said la Ramée, "I want the chokepeau: without that they will call me to account for not having cried out. Put it in deep, your excellence—stuff it in!"

Grimaud set to work to obey the officer's directions, who made a sign that he had something more to say.

"Speak, then," said the duke.

"Now, your excellence," continued la Ramée, "should any misfortune befall me on your account, do not forget that I have a wife and four children."

"Make yourself perfectly easy on that score—stuff it in!" cried the duke.

In one moment la Ramée was gagged, and laid on the ground,

and two or three chairs were overturned, as if there had been a struggle. Grimaud then took all his keys from his pocket, first opened the door of the room where they were, and doubled-locked it when they had gone out; then they hastily went through the gallery leading to the little enclosure; and the three doors were successively opened and shut, with a promptitude that did great honour to Grimaud's skill. At last they reached the place where they played tennis: it was quite deserted—not even a sentinel, nor any one at the windows.

The duke ran to the rampart, and saw three horsemen on the other side of the trench, with two led horses. He exchanged a sign with them: it was indeed for him that they were waiting.

In the meantime Grimaud was fastening the rope which was to give them liberty. It was not a rope-ladder, but a clew of silk, on a stick, which was to pass through the legs, and unwind itself by the weight of him who was straddling on it.

"Go!" said the duke.

"The first, your excellence?" demanded Grimaud.

"Certainly," said the duke, "If I am caught, I only run the hazard of imprisonment; if you are caught, you will be hanged."

"That's true," said Grimaud. And immediately setting himself astride on the stick, he began his perilous descent. The duke followed him with involuntary fear. He had already accomplished three-fourths of his descent, when the cord suddenly broke, and Grimaud fell into the trench.

The duke called out, but Grimaud uttered no complaint; and yet he must have been seriously hurt, for he remained motionless on the spot where he had fallen. One of the men who was waiting, immediately slipped down into the trench, and fastened a rope to Grimaud's shoulders; whilst the two others, who held the other end of the rope, drew him up to them.

"Descend, your excellence," said the man in the trench; "there are not more than fifteen feet to fall, and the grass is soft."

The duke had already commenced operations. His performance was much more difficult, for he had no longer the stick to support him: he was therefore obliged to descend by the strength of his

hands, and that from a height of fifty feet. But we have said that he was active, vigorous, and cool; so that, in less than five minutes, he found himself at the extremity of the cord. As the gentleman had told him, he was now not more than fifteen feet from the earth: he therefore let go his hold, and fell on his feet, without hurting himself. He then mounted the shelving bank of the trench, on the summit of which he found Rochefort. The other gentlemen were unknown to him. Grimaud, still insensible, was fastened to a horse.

"Gentlemen," said the duke, "I will thank you hereafter, but at present we have not a moment to lose. Forward, then—forward! He who loves me, follows me."

And he threw himself on his horse, and set off at full gallop, eagerly inhaling every breeze, and crying out, with an expression of joy quite impossible to describe—"Free! Free! Free!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

D'ARTAGNAN ARRIVES JUST IN THE NICK OF TIME.

D'Artagnan received at Blois the sum which Mazarin, from his anxiety to see him again as soon as possible, had persuaded himself to give him for his future services.

From Blois to Paris was a journey of four days for an ordinary horseman. D'Artagnan reached the barrier of St. Denis about four o'clock in the afternoon of the third day. Formerly, he would have only taken two days; and we have already seen that Athos, having left home three hours later, had arrived four-and-twenty hours before.

Planchet was out of the habit of these forced marches, and d'Artagnan reproached him for his effeminacy.

"Well, sir," replied he, "forty leagues in three days is, I think, pretty good for a seller of burnt almonds."

"And you really are become a shopkeeper, Planchet? And do

you seriously intend, now that we have met again, to vegetate in your shop?"

"Sir," answered Planchet, "you alone are formed for a life of activity. Look at M. Athos. Who would say that he was the famous knight-errant that we knew of old? He now lives like a regular gentleman farmer, or a true lord of the soil. Depend upon it, sir, that there is nothing so desirable as a tranquil existence."

"Hypocrite!" said d'Artagnan; "it is plain enough that you are drawing near Paris, and that in Paris a cord and a gallows await you."

In fact, at this point of the conversation, the two travellers reached the barrier. Planchet drew his hat over his eyes, considering that he was going to pass through some streets where he was well known, and d'Artagnan raised his moustache, on thinking of Porthos, who must be expecting him in the rue Triquetonne. He thought of the means of making him forget his lordship of de Bracieux, and the homeric kitchens of Pierrefonds.

On turning the corner of the rue Montmartre, he discovered Porthos at one of the windows of the hotel de la Chevrette, in a coat of celestial blue, embroidered with silver, and yawning so awfully as almost to dislocate his jaw; so that the passengers contemplated with respectful admiration that gentleman, so rich and handsome, who appeared to be wearied of his wealth and his grandeur.

Scarcely had d'Artagnan and Planchet turned the corner of the street, when Porthos also saw them.

"Ah, d'Artagnan!" he exclaimed, "praised be God, it is you!"

"Ah! how are you, my dear friend?" inquired d'Artagnan.

A small knot of gaping boobies soon formed round the horses, and the stable-boys who held them, and the cavaliers who thus talked, with their noses cocked up in the air; but a frown from d'Artagnan, and a threatening gesture from Planchet, well understood by them, dispersed the crowd, which was becoming more numerous, precisely because it did not know why it had collected.

Porthos had already come down to the door. "Ah, my dear friend," said he, "how badly off my horses are here!"

"Indeed!" said d'Artagnan:" I am sincerely grieved for those noble animals."

"And I myself also," said Porthos, "was badly off too; and had it not been for the hostess;" continued he, balancing himself on his legs, with his grand air of self-satisfaction, "who is handsome enough, and understands a joke, I must inevitably have sought another lodging."

The fair Madeline, who had drawn near during this dialogue, stepped back, and turned pale as death, on hearing Porthos's words, for she expected a second edition of the Swiss scene; but, to her great astonishment, d'Artagnan did not even frown, and, instead of being angry, he said to Porthos, laughing—

"Yes, I comprehend, my dear friend. The air of the rue Triquetonne is not equal to that of the valley of Pierrefonds. But never mind: I will soon make you take a better."

"And when?"

"Faith! very shortly, I hope."

"Ah, so much the better!"

This exclamation of Porthos was succeeded by a low and lengthened groan, which issued from a corner behind the door. D'Artagnan, who had just dismounted, then saw the *basso-relievo* of Mousqueton's enormous paunch traced out upon the wall, and discovered that it was from his lugubrious throat that these doleful plaints had been emitted.

"And you also, my poor Mousqueton, you are out of your element in this miserable hotel—is it not so?" demanded d'Artagnan, in that bantering tone, in which, perhaps, there was as much compassion as mockery.

"He finds the cooking detestable," said Porthos.

"Why then does he not take it into his own hands, as at Chantilly?" said d'Artagnan.

"Ah, sir!" said Mousqueton, "I have not here, as I had there, the prince's stews, where I took the large carp, and his highness's forests, where I caught the fine partridges in nets. As for the

cellar, I have thoroughly examined it, and really it is but a poor concern."

"M. Mouston," said d'Artagnan, "I should really pity you, if I had not at present something of more pressing importance to attend to."

Then taking Porthos aside. "My dear du Vallon," said he, "here you are, all ready dressed; and it is fortunate, for I am going to take you immediately to the cardinal."

"Really!" said Porthos, opening his eyes wide with astonishment.

"Yes, my friend."

"An introduction?"

"Does that frighten you?"

"No, but it causes me some emotion."

"Oh, never mind. You have not to appear before the other cardinal, and this one will not bear you down by the weight of his dignity."

"Nevertheless, you understand, d'Artagnan—the court!"

"Ah, but my friend, there is no longer a court."

"The queen!"

"I was near saying there is no longer a queen. The queen? Pluck up your courage, we shall not see her."

"And do you say that we are going immediately to the Palais Royal!"

"Immediately. Only, to prevent delay, I will borrow one of your horses."

"They are all four at your service."

"Oh, I only want one for the present."

"Shall we not take our servants with us?"

"Yes, take Mousqueton: he may be useful. As for Planchet, he has his reasons for not going to court.

"And why?"

"Oh, he is on bad terms with his eminence."

"Mouston," said Porthos, "saddle Vulcan and Bayard."

"And shall I take Rustaud, sir?"

"No, take a show-horse—take Phœbus or Superb. We are going on a visit of ceremony."

Ah!" said Mousquetou, breathing freely again, "we are only going to pay a visit then?"

"Oh yes, Mouston," said d'Artagnan, "nothing else. Only, to be prepared, put pistols into the holsters: you will find mine loaded at my saddle."

Mouston sighed. He did not well understand these visits of ceremony, which were made armed to the teeth.

"Really," said Porthos, looking complacently at his retiring valet, "you are right, d'Artagnan. Mouston will do: he makes a very handsome appearance."

D'Artagnan smiled.

"And you," continued Porthos—"are you not going to change your dress?"

"No, I remain as I am."

"But you are entirely covered with perspiration and dust, and your boots are dreadfully splashed."

"This careless travelling costume will testify my eagerness to obey the cardinal's injunctions."

At this moment Mousqueton returned, with the three horses fully equipped. D'Artagnan mounted as if he had taken a week's rest.

Oh," said he to Planchet, "my long sword—"

I," said Porthos pointing to a slight dress sword, with a golden hilt, "I have my court sword."

"Take your rapier, my friend."

"And why?"

"I do not know—but at any rate take it."

"My rapier, Mouston," cried Porthos.

"But this is a regular war equipment, sir!" said he. "Are we going on a campaign? Tell it me at once, and I will take my precautions accordingly."

"With us, Mouston," replied d'Artagnan, "you know very well, it is always right to take precaution. Either you have a very bad memory, or you have forgotten that we were not accustomed to pass our nights at balls and serenades.

"Alas! that is true," said Mousqueton, whilst arming himself from top to toe; "but I had forgotten it."

They set off at a good pace, and reached the Palais Cardinal at about a quarter past seven. There was a considerable crowd in the streets, for it was the day of Pentecost; and this crowd gazed with astonishment at the two cavaliers, one of whom was so fresh, that he looked as if he had just come out of a band-box, whilst the other was as completely covered with dust as if he had just left a field of battle.

Mousqueton also attracted the observation of the curious idlers; and as the romance of *Don Quixote* was then much in vogue, some said that it was Sancho, who, having lost one master, had found two.

On reaching the antechamber, d'Artagnan found himself in a well-known country. The musketeers of his own company were on guard. He ordered the groom of the chamber to be called, to whom he showed the cardinal's letter, enjoining him to return instantaneously. The groom of the chamber bowed, and went to his eminence's apartment.

D'Artagnan turned towards Porthos, and thought he saw a slight degree of agitation. He smiled, and putting his mouth to his ear, "Courage, my brave friend," said he. "Do not be nervous. Believe me the eagle's eye is closed, and we are now dealing with a mere vulture. Keep yourself stiff and unbending, as on the day of the bastion of St. Gervais, and do not bow too low to this Italian: it would give him a mean opinion of you."

"Very well—very well," answered Porthos.

The groom of the chamber reappeared. "Enter, gentlemen," said he: "his eminence expects you."

Mazarin was seated in his cabinet, endeavouring to erase as many names as possible from the pension and benefice list. He saw d'Artagnan and Porthos enter from the corner of his eye; and although, on first hearing them announced by the groom of the chamber, his eyes had sparkled with delight, he externally betrayed no emotion.

"Ah! it is you, is it, lieutenant?" said he. "You have made no delay: that's well. I am glad to see you."

"Thank your excellence. Here I am, at your eminence's com-

mands, as also is M. du Vallon, one of my old friends, who concealed his rank under the name of Porthos."

Porthos bowed to the cardinal.

"A superb cavalier," said Mazarin.

Porthos turned his head from one side to the other, moving his shoulders in a manner replete with dignity.

"The best sword in the realm, your excellence," said d'Artagnan; "and a great many people know it who do not say so, and who, indeed, have not the power of saying so."

Porthos bowed to d'Artagnan.

Mazarin loved handsome soldiers, almost as much as Frederick of Prussia loved them in after times. He began to admire the nervous hands, enormous shoulders, and determined look of Porthos. He fancied that he saw before him the safety of his ministry and of the realm, cut out of flesh and bone. This recalled to his recollection that the old association of the musketeers consisted of four persons.

"And your two other friends?" demanded Mazarin.

Porthos opened his mouth, thinking it a good opportunity for putting in a word in his turn. D'Artagnan gave him a sign from the corner of his eye.

"Our other friends," said he, "are at present prevented. They will join us hereafter."

Mazarin coughed slightly. "And this gentleman, more at liberty than they are—will he willingly enter my service?" demanded Mazarin.

"Yes, your excellence, and that from pure devotion; for M. de Bracieux is rich."

"Rich?" said Marazin, from whom this word alone had always the power of extracting vast respect.

"Fifty thousand livres of rent," said Porthos.

This was the first word he had spoken.

"Out of pure devotion," replied Mazarin, with his acute smile —"out of pure devotion?"

"Your excellence perhaps has not faith in that expression?" said d'Artagnan.

"And you, yourself, Sir Gascon?" said Mazarin, resting his elbows on his desk, and his chin on both his hands.

"I?" said d'Artagnan; "I have as much faith in devotion as in a baptismal name, which, for example, must naturally be followed by a surname. Assuredly, one disposition may be more devoted than another; but it is always necessary that there should be some crowning object at the end of devotion."

"And your friend, for instance—what crowning object would he wish to have at the end of his devotion?"

"Why, your excellence, my friend has three magnificent estates—that of du Vallon, at Corbeil; that of de Bracieux, in the Soissonnais; and that of Pierrefonds, in the Valois. Now, your excellence, he desires to have one of these estates erected into a barony."

"Is that all?" demanded Mazarin, whose eyes sparkled with joy on perceiving that he could reward Porthos's devotion without opening his purse. "Is that all? The thing can be managed."

"I shall be a baron!" murmured Porthos, making one step forward.

"I told you so," said d'Artagnan, keeping him back with his hand; "and his excellence reiterates my assurance."

"And you, M. d'Artagnan—what do you want?"

"Your excellence, next September it will be twenty years since Cardinal Richelieu made me a lieutenant."

"Yes; and you want Cardinal Mazarin to make you a captain?" D'Artagnan bowed.

"Well, all this does not amount to an impossibility; we shall see, gentlemen, we shall see. Now, M. du Vallon," said Mazarin, "what kind of service do you prefer? That of the city, or of the country?"

Porthos opened his mouth to reply.

"Your excellence," said d'Artagnan; "M. du Vallon is like myself, he prefers extraordinary service; that is to say, such enterprises as are deemed mad and impossible."

This gasconade did not displease Mazarin, who began to think.

"And yet I will confess to you, that I sent for you to give you a

sedentary post. I have certain anxieties.—But what is the matter now?" cried Mazarin.

In fact, a great noise was heard in the antechamber, and almost at the same time the door of the cabinet was thrown open, and a man, covered with dust, rushed into the room, exclaiming,

"The cardinal! Where is the cardinal?"

Mazarin thought that it was an attempt at assassination, and drew back; and d'Artagnan and Porthos threw themselves between the cardinal and the intruder.

"Ah, sir," said Mazarin, "what is the matter, that you come in here as if it were the market-place?"

"Your excellence," said the officer whom he thus reproached, "two words with you. I wish to speak to you immediately, and alone. I am M. de Poins, an officer of the guards, on duty at the prison of Vincennes."

The officer was so pale and agitated, that Mazarin, convinced that he was the bearer of some important intelligence, made a sign to d'Artagnan and Porthos to give way to him. They therefore retired into a corner of the apartment.

"Speak, sir—speak quickly?" cried Mazarin: "what can be the matter?"

"The matter is," said the messenger, "that M. de Beaufort has just escaped from the chatean of Vincennes."

Mazarin uttered an exclamation, and became as pale as the man who had given him this information. He fell back upon his chair, as if he had been annihilated.

"Escaped!" cried he: "M. de Beaufort escaped!"

"Your excellence, I saw him in full flight, from the summit of the terrace."

"And why did you not fire on him?"

"He was out of gun-shot."

"But M. de Chavigny—what was he doing?"

"He was absent."

"And la Ramée?"

"He was found bound in the prisoner's chamber, a gag in his mouth, and a dagger by his side."

"And that man, whom he had engaged as an assistant?"

"He was an accomplice, and escaped with the duke."

Mazarin groaned.

"Your excellence," said d'Artagnan, advancing one step towards the cardinal.

"What?" said Mazarin.

"It appears to me, that your eminence is losing most valuable time."

"What do you mean?"

"If your eminence were to order a pursuit after the prisoner, perhaps he might even yet be overtaken. France is extensive, and the nearest frontier point is sixty leagues off."

"And who would pursue him?" said Mazarin.

"I, your eminence!"

"And you would arrest him?"

"Why not?"

"You would arrest the Duke of Beaufort, armed, in the field?"

"If your excellence were to command me to arrest the devil himself, I would lay hold of him by the horns, and bring him to you."

"And I, also," added Porthos.

"And you also!" said Mazarin, looking at the two men with astonishment. "But the duke will not yield himself without a deperate resistance."

"Well, then," said d'Artagnan, whose eyes lighted up with ardour, "battle! It is a long time since we have fought, is it not, Porthos?"

"Battle!" said Porthos.

"And you think that you can overtake him?"

"Yes, if we are better mounted than he is."

"Then take what guards you may find, and pursue him."

"And do you give the order, your excellence?"

"I set my name to it," said Mazarin, taking some paper, and writing a few lines.

"Add, your excellence, that we may take all the horses that we may meet on the road."

"Yes, yes," said Mazarin, "on the king's service! Take it, and be off!"

"Good, your excellence."

"M. du Vallon, your baronny is on the duke of Beaufort's head: you have nothing to do but to catch him. As for you, my dear M. d'Artagnan, I promise you nothing; but if you bring him back, dead or alive, you may ask for what you like."

"To horse, Porthos!" said d'Artagnan, taking his friend's hand.

"Here I am," answered Porthos, with his sublime imperturbability.

And they went down the grand staircase, taking with them the guards they met, and crying, "To horse! to horse!"

About ten men were collected. D'Artagnan and Porthos leaped, the one on Vulcan, the other on Bayard; Mousqueton bestrode Phœbus.

"Follow me!" cried d'Artagnan.

"Forward!" cried Porthos.

And digging the spurs into the flanks of their noble steeds, they set off by the rue St. Honoré like a furious tempest.

"Well, sir baron," said d'Artagnan, "I promised you some exercise, and you see that I am a man of my word."

"Yes, my captain," replied Porthos.

They looked round: Mousqueton, sweating more than his horse, kept the proper distance; and behind him galloped the ten guards.

The astonished citizens looked out of their doors, and the enraged dogs barked after them.

At the corner of the churchyard of St. Jean, d'Artagnan upset a man; but this was an affair of too little consequence to stop men in such a hurry. The troop therefore galloped on, as if the horses were winged.

Alas! there are no trivial circumstances in this world; and we shall see that this circumstance was very near overthrowing the monarchy

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE HIGH ROAD.

They went at the same pace through all the faubourg St. Antoine, and the road to Vincennes: they were therefore soon out of the city, and in the forest, and very shortly came in sight of the village.

The horses became more excited at every step, and their nostrils grew as red as a heated furnace. D'Artagnan, with his spurs in his horse's sides, preceded Porthos rather more than two feet; Mousqueton followed at two lengths; the guards came behind, distanced progressively, according to the quality of their horses.

From the top of an eminence, d'Artagnan perceived a group of people, collected on the side of the trench, opposite that part of the prison which looks towards St. Maur. He at once conjectured that this was the point from which the prisoner had escaped, and that it was here that he might gain some intelligence. In five minutes he had reached the place, where the guards successively came up with him.

All those who composed this assemblage were earnestly engaged: they were looking at the cord, still hanging from the loop-hole, which was broken at about twenty feet from the ground. Their eyes were measuring the height, and they were exchanging sundry conjectures. On the top of the rampart, the sentinels were pacing to and fro, with an affrighted air.

A piquet of troops, commanded by a sergeant, was removing the citizens from the place where the duke had mounted his horse.

D'Artagnan went straight up to the sergeant.

"Sir," said the sergeant, "no one must stop here."

"That order does not apply to me," replied d'Artagnan. "Have the fugitives been followed?"

"Yes, sir; but unfortunately they are well mounted."

"And how many are they?"

"Four efficient men, and a fifth, whom they have carried off wounded."

"Four!" said d'Artagnan, looking at Porthos: "do you hear, baron—there are only four?"

A smile of joy illumined the countenance of Porthos.

"And what length of start have they got?"

"Two hours and a quarter, sir."

"Two hours and a quarter. It is nothing: we are well mounted —are we not, Porthos?"

Porthos heaved a sigh: he was thinking of what his poor horses had to expect.

"Very well," said d'Artagnan. "And now, by what road are they gone?"

"As to that, sir, I am forbidden to say."

D'Artagnan drew a paper from his pocket. "A king's order," said he.

"Then speak to the governor."

"And where is the governor?"

"In the country."

D'Artagnan coloured with rage, whilst a terrible frown darkened his brow.

"Wretch!" said he to the sergeant, "I believe that you are mocking me. But look!"

He unfolded the paper, held it out to the sergeant with one hand, and with the other he took a pistol from his holster, which he cocked.

"An order from the king, I tell you! Read it, and answer, or I blow out your brains! What road have they taken?"

The sergeant saw that d'Artagnan was in earnest. "The road of Vendômois." he replied.

"And by what gate did they go out?"

"By the gate of St. Maur."

"If you have deceived me, wretch," cried d'Artagnan, "you shall be hanged to-morrow."

"And you, if you overtake them, will not return to get me hanged," muttered the sergeant.

D'Artagnan shrugged his shoulders, made a sign to his escort, and pushed forward.

"This way, this way, gentlemen," said he, going towards the gate which had been indicated.

But, now that the duke had escaped, the porter had judged it advisable to double-lock the gate most carefully. It was therefore necessary to compel him to open it, in the same manner as the sergeant had been constrained to obedience; and by this process ten minutes more were lost.

This last obstacle being surmounted, the troop resumed its course with the same rapidity. But all the horses did not proceed with the same ardour. Some of them could not sustain such a desperate pace longer than an hour; and three gave in at the expiration of that time; one fell down.

D'Artagnan, who never turned his head, did not even perceive it. Porthos told him of it in his usual quiet way.

"Let only us two reach them," said d'Artagnan; "it is all that is necessary, since there are only four of them."

"That is true," answered Porthos. And he set his spurs into his horse.

At the expiration of two hours, the horses had gone twelve leagues without stopping. Their legs began to tremble; and the foam, flowing from their mouths, spotted the doublets of the cavaliers, whilst the perspiration saturated their nether garments.

"Let us rest a moment, to breathe these unhappy animals," cried Porthos.

"Kill them, on the contrary—kill them," replied d'Artagnan, "only, let us reach them. I can perceive fresh tracks: it is not a quarter of a hour since they passed here.'

In fact, the road was cut up by horses' feet; and the tracks could be seen by the last glimmerings of the fading light of day.

Again they set off; but, at the end of two leagues, Mousqueton's horse fell.

'Ah!" said Porthos; "there is Phœbus done for."

"The cardinal will pay you a thousand pistoles for him."

"Oh," said Porthos, "I am above that."

"Off again, then," cried d'Artagnan, "and at a gallop."

"Yes, if we can."

In fact, d'Artagnan's horse refused to stir a step further: he had no longer any breath; and a last prick of the spur, instead of making him go on, only made him fall.

"Ah, the fiend!" cried Porthos, "there is Vulcan done up too."

"By St. Denis!" cried d'Artagnan, tearing his hair, "we must stop, then! Give me your horse, Porthos? Well! what the plague are you about now?"

"Ah, by Jove!" answered Porthos, "I am falling; or, rather, Bayard is."

D'Artagnan wished to raise him, whilst Porthos freed himself from his stirrups as well as he could; but the blood was flowing from his nostrils.

"There goes the third!" cried he: "well, now, all is up with us!"

At this moment the neighing of a horse was heard.

"Hark!" said d'Artagnan.

"What is that?"

"I hear a horse."

"It is one of our comrades, who is coming up with us."

"No," said d'Artagnan, "it is in front."

"Then it must be something else," said Porthos. And he listened in turn, bending his ear towards the side which d'Artagnan had indicated.

"Sir," said Mousqueton, who, after having left his horse on the high road, had followed his master on foot—"sir, Phœbus could not struggle on any longer, and——"

"Silence, then," cried Porthos.

In fact, at this very moment, a second neigh was heard, borne on the evening breeze.

"It is about five hundred paces in front of us," said d'Artagnan.

"Sir," said Mousqueton, "at about five hundred paces in front of us, there is a small hunting-lodge."

"Mousqueton—your pistols!" said d'Artagnan.

"I have got them in my hand," replied Mousqueton.

"Porthos, take yours from your holsters."

"I have them."

"Very good," said d'Artagnan, taking his own. "Now Porthos, do you understand?"

"Not very well?"

"We are on the king's service."

"Very well?"

"For the king's service we require these horses."

"That is it," said Porthos.

"Therefore, not one word, but to work

All three advanced through the darkness, as silent as ghosts. At a turn of the road they saw a light, shining in the midst of the trees.

"There is the house," said d'Artagnan, in a low voice. "Let me take the command, Porthos, and do as I do."

They glided from tree to tree, and came within twenty paces of the house, without being discovered. From that spot they could see, by means of a lantern suspended from a shed, four handsome-looking horses. A servant was cleaning them; and close by were the saddles and bridles.

D'Artagnan went up briskly, making a sign to his companions to keep some paces in the rear.

"I will buy these horses of you," said he to the servant.

"The man turned, mightily astonished, but did not say anything.

"Did you not hear, you rascal?" said d'Artagnan.

"Yes," he replied.

"And why do you not answer?"

"Because these horses are not for sale."

"Then I must take possession of them," said d'Artagnan. And he put his hand on the one nearest to him. His two companions made their appearance at the same moment, and did the same.

"But, gentlemen," exclaimed the valet, "they have just travelled six leagues, and have been unsaddled scarcely half an hour."

"Half an hour's rest is quite sufficient," said d'Artagnan: "they will be in better wind for it."

The groom called for help. A kind of steward came out, just as

d'Artagnan and his companions were putting the saddles on the horses' backs. The steward was going to call out.

"My good friend," said d'Artagnan, "if you say one word, I blow your brains out." And he showed him the barrel of a pistol, which he placed under his arm, that he might continue his operations.

"But, sir," said the steward, "do you know that these horses belong to M. de Montbazon?"

"So much the better," answered d'Artagnan, "for they must therefore be good animals."

"Sir," said the steward, retreating step by step, and endeavouring to regain the door, "I warn you that I shall call my people."

"And I mine!" replied d'Artagnan. "I am a lieutenant of the king's musketeers. I have ten guards following me, and—there, do you not hear them galloping?—we shall soon see."

Nothing was to be heard, but the steward feared that he should hear.

"Are you ready, Porthos?" inquired d'Artagnan.

"I have finished."

"And you, Mousqueton?"

"And I also."

"Then to horse, and off!"

All three threw themselves on their horses.

"Help!" cried the steward. "Here, you lacqueys, bring your carbines."

"Forward!" said d'Artagnan: "we shall have a volley."

And all three set off like the wind.

"Help! help!" bawled the steward, whilst the groom ran towards the neighbouring buildings.

"Take care you don't kill your own horses," called out d'Artagnan, roaring with laughter.

"Fire!" cried the steward.

A flash like a gleam of lightning illumined the road, and, along with the report, the three horsemen heard the whistling of the balls, which were lost in the air.

"They shoot like lacqueys," said Porthos. "There was better

shooting in the times of Richelieu. Do you remember the road of Crevecœur, Mousqueton?"

"Ah, sir! the right buttock even now pains me."

"Are you sure that we are on the track, d'Artagnan?" demanded Porthos.

"Ah! you did not hear, then?"

"What?"

"That these horses belonged to M. de Montbazon."

"Well?"

"Well, M. de Montbazon is the husband of Madame de Montbazon."

"And what then?"

"Why, Madame de Montbazon is the Duke of Beaufort's mistress."

"Ah, I comprehend!" said Porthos: "therefore she had placed the relays."

"Exactly so."

"And we are pursuing the duke with the horses that he has just quitted."

"My dear Porthos, you have decidedly a most superior intellect," said d'Artagnan, in a manner half in jest, half in earnest.

"Phew!" said Porthos, "I am what God made me."

Thus they went on for about an hour. The horses were white with foam, and the blood was dropping from their flanks.

"Halloo! what did I see down there?" said d'Artagnan,

"You are mighty lucky if you can see anything in such a night as this," replied Porthos.

"Sparks," said d'Artagnan.

"And I also saw them," said Mousqueton.

"Aha, can we have overtaken them?" cried Porthos.

"Good—a dead horse," said d'Artagnan, pulling his horse up from a violent start: "it seems as if they also were rather in want of wind."

"I fancy that I hear a troop of horsemen," said Porthos, bending down over his horse's mane.

"Impossible!"

"They are numerous."

"Then it must be something else."

"Another horse!" said Porthos.

"Dead?"

"No—dying."

"Saddled or unsaddled?"

"Saddled."

"Then it must be them."

"Courage! we have them."

"But if they are numerous," said Mousqueton, "it is not we who have them, but they who have us."

"Bah!" said d'Artagnan, "as we pursue them, they will think us stronger than we are: therefore they will take fright, and disperse."

"That is certain," said Porthos.

"Ah!—do you see?" demanded d'Artagnan.

"Yes, more sparks; this time I saw them myself," replied Porthos.

"Forward! forward!" cried d'Artagnan, with his ringing voice, "and in five minutes we shall laugh."

And they went forward with fresh vigour. The horses, mad with pain and emulation, flew over the dark road, in the middle of which they began to descry a mass, more compact and more obscure than the rest of the horizon.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE ENGAGEMENT.

They went on in this manner for ten minutes more.

Suddenly two dark spots separated themselves from the mass, came forward, grew larger, and, as they increased in size, assumed the form of two horsemen.

"So!" said d'Artagnan, "they are coming to meet us."

"So much the worse for those who come," replied Porthos.

"Who goes there?" cried a hoarse voice.

The three advancing horsemen neither stopped nor responded, and the only sound heard was that of swords leaving their scabbards, and the click of pistols as they were cocked by the two dark phantoms.

"Bridle between the teeth!" cried d'Artagnan.

Porthos comprehended; and each drew a pistol from his holster with his left hand, and cocked it.

"Who goes there?" demanded the same voice, a second time: "not one step further, or you are dead men."

"Bah!" cried Porthos, almost choked with the dust, and chewing his bridle as a horse chews his bit—"bah! you are not the first persons we have ever encountered."

At these words the two shadows barred their passage, and the barrels of two levelled pistols glittered in the starlight.

"Back!" cried d'Artagnan, "or it is you who are dead men."

"Two pistol-shots responded to this threat; but the two assailants went forward with such rapidity, that they were on their adversaries in an instant. The report of a third pistol-shot was heard, fired by d'Artagnan at full speed, and his enemy fell. As for Porthos, he dashed against his adversary with such violence, that, although he parried his sword-thrust, he was carried by the shock ten paces from his horse.

"Finish him, Mousqueton, finish him!" bawled out Porthos. And he rushed forward to the side of his friend, who had already renewed the pursuit,

"Well?" said Porthos.

"I broke his head," said d'Artagnan. "And you?"

"I only upset him, But listen—"

They heard the report of a carbine: it was Mousqueton, who, in passing, had executed his master's orders.

"Come along," said d'Artagnan, "that's all right, we have gained the first point in the game."

"Aha!" said Porthos, "here come some fresh players."

In fact, two more horsemen, detached from the principal group, now made their appearance, and came forward rapidly, again to bar their road.

This time d'Artagnan did not even wait to be addressed. "Give way!" he cried, "give way!"

"What do you want?" demanded a voice.

"The duke!" roared out d'Artagnan and Porthos at the same moment.

A burst of laughter was the reply; but it terminated in a groan: d'Artagnan had run the laugher completely through the body. At the same time there were two nearly simultaneous reports: it was Porthos and his adversary, who had fired at each other. D'Artagnan turned quickly in his saddle, and saw Porthos close to him.

"Bravo, Porthos!" said he, "I think you have killed him."

"I fancy that I have only shot his horse," answered Porthos.

"What would you have, my dear fellow? One does not hit the bull's-eye every time, and ought not to complain when the shot reaches the target.—Halloo! what the deuce is the matter with my horse?"

"Why, he is tumbling down, to be sure," replied Porthos, as he pulled up his own.

In fact, d'Artagnan's horse stumbled forward, and fell on his knees; then, after a heavy groan, he was stretched upon the road. He had received the ball of d'Artagnan's first opponent in his chest. D'Artagnan uttered a tremendous oath.

"Do you want a horse, sir?" inquired Mousqueton.

"By Jove! that's a pretty question!" exclaimed d'Artagnan.

"Here is one, sir," said Mousqueton.

"And how did you come by these two led horses?" demanded d'Artagnan, at the same time leaping on one of them.

"Their masters being dead, I thought they might be useful—so I took them."

In the meantime, Porthos had reloaded his pistol.

"Attention!" said d'Artagnan: "here are two more."

"Aha! why there will be enough to last till to-morrow!" said Porthos.

In reality, two more horsemen were rapidly advancing.

"Oh, sir!" said Mousqueton, "the man you knocked over is up again."

"Why did not you treat him as you did the other?"

"Because my hands were full, sir, holding the horses."

A shot was heard, and Mousqueton emitted a cry of pain. "Ah, sir!" he cried out, "in the other!—precisely in the other! This wound will be an exact counterpart of that on the Amiens road."

Porthos turned like a lion, and rushed upon the dismounted horseman, who endeavoured to draw his sword; but before it could get out of its scabbard, Porthos gave him such a terrible blow on the head, with the hilt of his own, that he fell like an ox under the butcher's mace.

Mousqueton, groaning bitterly, gently glided from his horse, his wound not allowing him to keep the saddle.

When he saw the horsemen, d'Artagnan halted, and recharged his pistol. His fresh horse had also a carbine at the saddle-bow.

"Here I am!" said Porthos; "shall we wait, or charge them?"

"Charge!" cried d'Artagnan.

"Charge!" responded Porthos.

They stuck their spurs into their horses' sides. The horsemen were not more than twenty paces from them.

"In the king's name, let us pass!" cried d'Artagnan.

"The king has nothing to do here!" replied a deep-sounding voice, which appeared to issue from a cloud; for the horseman was enveloped in dust.

"Very well—we shall see if the king cannot pass everywhere!" answered d'Artagnan.

"See, then!" said the same voice.

Two pistol shots resounded almost at the same moment, one from d'Artagnan, the other from Porthos's adversary. D'Artagnan's ball carried off his adversary's hat; the ball of Porthos's opponent, penetrated his horse's neck, which fell dead with a heavy groan.

"For the last time, where are you going?" cried the same voice.

"To the devil!" replied d'Artagnan.

"Good—make yourself easy—you will soon get there."

D'Artagnan saw the barrel of a carbine levelled at him. He had no time to draw another pistol, but remembered a piece of advice which Athos had formerly given him: he made his horse rear.

The ball struck the animal full in the stomach. D'Artagnan felt that he was failing him, and, with his wonderful activity, threw himself off on one side.

"Aha!" said the same sounding and bantering voice, "it is verily a butchery of horses, and not a combat between men, in which we are engaged. To the sword, sir—to the sword!" And he leaped from his horse.

"To the sword? So be it!" replied d'Artagnan: "that is just what I like."

In two bounds d'Artagnan was engaged with his adversary, whose sword he felt against his own. D'Artagnan, with his accustomed skill, had brought his sword *en tierce*, his favourite guard.

In the meantime, Porthos, kneeling behind his horse, which was struggling in the last convulsions, held a pistol in each hand.

But the combat had commenced between d'Artagnan and his adversary. The former had attacked most vigorously, in his usual way; but this time he had to contend with skill and a wrist which made him look about him. Twice being received *en quarte*, he retreated one step; but his adversary did not move: d'Artagnan therefore returned, and again engaged his sword *en tierce*. Two or three thrusts were exchanged, without any result: the sparks flew in clusters from their swords.

At last d'Artagnan thought that the time was come to make use of his favourite feint. He performed it most skilfully, executed it with the rapidity of lightning, and made the lunge with a force that he considered irresistible. The thrust was parried.

"*Mordious!*" he cried out, in his Gascon accent.

At this exclamation, his adversary jumped backwards, and bending his uncovered head, endeavoured to discover d'Artagnan's countenance amid the darkness.

As for d'Artagnan, fearing a stratagem, he kept himself on his guard.

"Take care!" said Porthos to his adversary; "I have yet got two loaded pistols."

"The more reason that you should fire first," replied the other.

Porthos fired: a gleam illumined the field of battle.

At this light the two combatants each uttered a cry.

"Athos!" exclaimed d'Artagnan.

"D'Artagnan!" cried Athos.

Athos raised his sword. D'Artagnan lowered his.

"Aramis!" cried out Athos, "do not fire!"

"Ah! is it you, Aramis?" said Porthos, throwing away his other pistol.

Aramis replaced his in his holster, and sheathed his sword.

"My son!" said Athos, holding out his hand to d'Artagnan. It was the name he gave him formerly, in his moments of affection.

"Athos," said d'Artagnan, wringing his hands: "you defend him, then! And I, who had sworn to bring him back dead or alive —ah! I am dishonoured!"

"Kill me," said Athos, baring his breast, "if your honour requires my death."

"Oh! misery, misery!" exclaimed d'Artagnan: "there was only one man in the world who could stop me, and fate decrees that that man should bar my passage. Ah! what shall I say to the cardinal?"

"You will tell him, sir," said a voice which sounded from above the heads of the combatants, "that he sent the only two men against me who could thus have vanquished four, and who could contend on terms of equality with the Count de la Fère and the Chevalier d'Herblay, and who did not surrender until they were surrounded by fifty men."

"The prince!" exclaimed Athos and Aramis, at the same moment retiring, so as to discover the Duke of Beaufort; whilst d'Artagnan and Porthos retreated a step.

"Fifty men!" muttered d'Artagnan and Porthos. They looked around them, and found that they were completely surrounded by horsemen.

"By the noise of your combat, gentlemen," said the duke, "I

thought that there were twenty men, and I returned with all my attendants, weary of flight, and wishing, in my turn, to draw my sword—when I found that there were but two of you."

"Yes, your excellence," said Athos, "but you yourself said, that they were two who were worth twenty."

"Come, gentlemen, your swords!" said the duke.

"Our swords!" cried d'Artagnan, raising his head, and recovering himself—"our swords? Never!"

"Never!" re-echoed Porthos.

Some of the men made a movement.

"One moment, your excellence," said Athos—"only two words." And he went up to the prince to whom, as he bent down towards him, he spoke a few words in a low voice.

"As you please, count," said the prince; "I am under too great obligations to you to refuse your first request. Retire, gentlemen," said he, to his escort. "Messieurs d'Artagnan and du Vallon, you are free!"

The order was immediately executed, and d'Artagnan and Porthos found themselves composing the centre of an immense circle.

"Now, d'Herblay," said Athos, "dismount, and come here."

Aramis dismounted, and went up to Porthos, whilst Athos approached d'Artagnan. Thus the four were again united.

"My friend," said Athos, "are you sorry that you have not shed my blood?"

"No," replied d'Artagnan. "What I regret is, to see us opposed to each other—we, who have hitherto been so closely united. I regret that we should meet in opposite camps. Ah! nothing will succeed with us again."

"Oh, no!" ejaculated Porthos, "all is over with us!"

"Well, then, join us," said Aramis.

"Silence, d'Herblay!" said Athos. "Propositions of this kind are not to be made to such gentlemen as these. If they have taken service with Mazarin, it is from conscientious conviction, like ourselves."

"In the meantime we are enemies," said Porthos. "Zounds! who would ever have believed that?"

D'Artagnan said nothing, but heaved a deep sigh.

Athos looked at them, and took their hands. "Gentlemen," said he, "this is a grave and serious affair, and my heart suffers as much as if you had pierced it through. Yes, we are separated—that is the great, the sad reality. But we have not yet declared war. Perhaps we have some conditions to make. A last conversation is indispensable."

"As for me, I demand it," said Aramis.

"I agree to it," said d'Artagnan proudly.

Porthos bowed his head in token of assent.

"Let us, then, appoint a place of meeting," continued Athos, "accessible to all; and, in a final interview, let us regulate definitively our mutual position, and the conduct we are to pursue towards each other."

"Very good," said the other three.

"You agree with me, then?" demanded Athos.

"Entirely."

"Well, then, the place?"

"The Place Royale—will that suit you?" said d'Artagnan.

"In Paris?"

"Yes."

Athos and Aramis looked at each other. Aramis gave a nod of assent.

"Let it be the Place Royale, then," said Athos.

"And when?"

"To-morrow evening, if you like."

"Shall you be returned?"

"Yes."

"At what hour?"

"At ten o'clock at night. Does that suit you?"

"Excellently well."

"From that interview," said Athos, "either war or peace will ensue; but, at any rate, my friends, our honour will be safe."

"Alas!" murmured d'Artagnan, "our honour, as soldiers, is gone!"

"D'Artagnan," said Athos, with great seriousness, "I protest

that you give me excruciating pain by thinking so; and when I also remember that we have crossed swords in hostile conflict. Yes," continued he, shaking his head with profound grief—"yes, you have said it: misfortune has invaded us. Come, Aramis."

"And we, Porthos," said d'Artagnan, "let us return, and carry our shame to the cardinal."

"And tell him, more especially," cried a voice, "that I am not too old to be a man of action."

D'Artagnan recognised Rochefort's voice.

"Can I do anything for you, gentlemen?" inquired the prince.

"Give your testimony to our having done all we could, your excellence."

"Make yourselves easy on that score: it shall be done. Adieu, gentlemen. I hope that we shall soon meet in Paris, and then you may take your revenge."

At these words the duke waved his hand as an adieu, put his horse to a gallop, and disappeared, followed by his escort, which was soon lost to sight in the obscurity, as the noise was in the distance.

D'Artagnan and Porthos found themselves alone, on the high road, with a man who held two horses by their bridles. They thought that it was Mousqueton, and went up to him.

"What do I see?" said d'Artagnan: "is it you, Grimaud?"

"Grimaud!" said Porthos.

Grimaud made a sign that the two friends were not mistaken.

"And whose horses are these?" demanded d'Artagnan.

"Who has given them to us?" inquired Porthos.

"The Count de la Fère."

"Athos, Athos," murmured d'Artagnan, "you think of every thing; you are indeed a perfect gentleman."

"So much the better," said Porthos. "I was afraid that we should have had to trudge it on foot." And he placed himself in the saddle, d'Artagnan having already mounted.

"And where are you going, Grimaud?" inquired d'Artagnan: "do you leave your master?"

"Yes, sir," answered Grimaud; "I am going to join the Viscount de Bragelonne, with the army in Flanders."

They then proceeded some paces in silence, on the high road towards Paris, when, suddenly, lamentations were heard, apparently issuing from a ditch.

"What is that?" said d'Artagnan.

"That?" said Porthos: "why, it must be Mousqueton."

"Oh, yes, sir, it is me," answered a plaintive voice, whilst a kind of shadow appeared on the opposite side of the road.

Porthos hastened to his steward, to whom he was sincerely attached.

"Are you dangerously wounded, my dear Mouston?" said he.

"Mouston!" exclaimed Grimaud, opening his eyes with astonishment.

"No, sir, I do not think I am; but I am wounded in a most inconvenient manner."

"Then you cannot mount your horse?"

"Oh, sir, what a proposition to make me!"

"Can you walk!"

"I will try, as far as the next house."

"What can we do?" said d'Artagnan, "for we must return to Paris."

"I will take charge of Mousqueton," said Grimaud.

"Thank you, my good Grimaud," said Porthos.

Grimaud dismounted, and gave his arm to his old friend, who received it with tears in his eyes; but Grimaud was unable positively to determine, whether they flowed from delight at seeing him, or from the pain of his wound.

As for d'Artagnan and Porthos, they silently pursued their journey to Paris.

Three hours after, they were passed by a courier, covered with dust. It was a man sent by the duke, and who was the bearer of a letter to the cardinal, in which, according to his promise, he bore testimony to the actions performed by d'Artagnan and Porthos.

Mazarin had passed a very bad night, when he received this letter, in which the prince himself proclaimed his liberty, and declared deadly war against him.

The cardinal read it two or three times; then folding and putting

it into his pocket—"What gives me some consolation," said he, "is that in the pursuit he has at least annihilated Broussel. Positively the Gascon is a most valuable man: he does me good service, even by his awkwardness."

The cardinal here alluded to the man whom d'Artagnan had knocked over at the corner of the cemetery of St. Jean, in Paris, and who was no other than the counsellor Broussel.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE GOOD-MAN BROUSSEL.

But, unfortunately for Cardinal Mazarin, who was at this time in a vein of ill-luck, the good-man Broussel was not quite annihilated.

In fact, he was quietly crossing the rue St. Honoré, when d'Artagnan's horse, at full speed, hit him on the shoulder, and upset him into the mud. As we have said, d'Artagnan had not paid the slightest attention to such a trivial circumstance. Besides, d'Artagnan partook of the profound and haughty contempt and indifference which the noblesse, and especially the military noblesse, at that time entertained towards the citizens. He had, therefore, been quite insensible to the misfortune which had befallen the little dark man, although that misfortune had been caused by himself; and before even the unhappy Broussel had been able to utter one cry, all that tempest of armed riders had vanished in the distance. Then only could the wounded man be heard, and raised up.

The spectators ran up to him, when they saw a man lie groaning in the street; they inquired his name, his address, and his title; and, as soon as he had told them that he was Broussel, the parliamentary counsellor, and that he lived in the rue St. Landry, a cry burst forth from the crowd—a terrible and a threatening cry—which frightened the wounded man as much as the whirlwind that had just passed over his body.

"Broussel!" they cried, "Broussel, our father! He who defends our rights against Mazarin! Broussel, the friend of the people, murdered, trodden under foot by the detestable and wicked cardinalists! Help, help! To arms! Death to the wretches!"

In an incredibly short time, the crowd became immense: they stopped a carriage, to put the little counsellor into it; but one of the people having suggested, that, in the present state of the wounded man, the motion of a carriage might do him harm, these fanatics proposed to carry him in their arms, and the proposition, made with enthusiasm, was received with unanimity. No sooner said than done. The people raised him, and bore him off, menacing and soothing in the same breath, like the giant in the fantastic tale, who grumbled whilst he caressed and dandled the dwarf in his arms.

Broussel as yet doubted this attachment of the Parisians to his person: he had not, however, sown opposition during three years, without the secret hope of one day reaping popularity. This demonstration, therefore, which now burst forth, delighted and elated him, for it gave him the measure of his popularity; but, on the other hand, this triumph was not without its alloy of anxiety. Independent of his bruises, which gave him much pain, he feared, at the corner of every street, to see some squadron of guards or musketeers suddenly make their appearance to charge this multitude; and then what would become of this triumpher, in the midst of such a brawl? He had constantly before his eyes the tornado of men, the iron-shod tempest, which had upset him with its blast. Therefore he said, in a feeble voice—"Make haste, my children, for I am really in great pain."

At each of these complaints there was an augmentation of groans, and a reduplication of maledictions around him.

They reached Broussel's house with some difficulty; the crowd, which had preceded him, having already filled the street, and drawn all the inhabitants of the neighbourhood to their doors and windows. At the window of a house, which had a narrow door, an old servant appeared bustling about, and calling out most vigorously, and another aged woman, who was crying. These two persons, who

appeared to be in great agitation, although it was betrayed in a different manner, questioned the people, who only responded by confused and unintelligible cries.

But when the counsellor appeared, carried by eight men, very pale, and looking with almost a dying eye at his house, his wife, and his servant, the good Dame Broussel, instantaneously fainted away; and the servant, raising her arms towards heaven, rushed to the staircase to meet her master, crying out—

"Oh, my God! if Friquet were only here to go for a surgeon."

Friquet was there—for where is not the Parisian Pickle?

Friquet had naturally taken advantage of the day of Pentecost, to ask for leave of absence from his master—a leave which could not be refused, as, by the terms of his engagement, he was to be a free man on the four grand fêtes of the year. Friquet was therefore at the head of the procession. The idea had, indeed, come into his head, that he should go for a surgeon; but, to confess the honest truth, he found it much more amusing to bawl out, with stunning force—"They have killed M. Broussel! M. Broussel, the father of the people! Long live M. Broussel!"—than to run through the deserted streets, simply to say to a man in black—"Come, Master Surgeon; the Counsellor Broussel wants you."

Unfortunately for Friquet, who sustained an important character in the procession, he had the imprudence to cling to the bars of the ground-floor window, that he might overlook the crowd. This ambition was the cause of his destruction: his mother spied him out, and despatched him for a surgeon.

Then she took the good man in her arms, and wanted to carry him herself up to the first floor; but at the foot of the stairs the counsellor placed himself on his legs, and declared that he found himself strong enough to mount them without assistance. He however entreated Gervaise, for that was the name of the servant, to endeavour to persuade the people to retire; but Gervaise would not hear of such a thing.

"Oh! my poor master! my dear master!" she cried.

"Yes, my good Gervaise," murmured Broussel to calm her, "tranquillize yourself—it is nothing."

"How should I tranquillize myself when you are bruised, crushed, and pounded to atoms?"

"No, no, I say," replied Broussel; "it is nothing, or almost nothing."

"Nothing—and you are covered with mud! nothing—and your hair is dripping with blood! Oh dear, oh dear! my poor dear master!"

"Hush there," said Broussel. "Hush!"

"Blood! oh dear, blood!" cried Gervaise.

"A physician! a surgeon! a doctor!" roared out the crowd: "the Counseller Broussel is dying! The Mazarins have murdered him!"

"Oh dear me," said Broussel, in utter despair, "the unlucky fellows will burn the house down!"

"Go to the window, and show yourself, master."

"I will take precious good care of that!" said Broussel. "It is all very well for the king to show himself. Tell them that I am better, Gervaise—tell them that I am going to place myself, not at the window, but in bed, and that they had better go away."

"But why do you wish them to go away? They are paying you great honour by remaining."

"Oh! but do you not see," cried Broussel, quite in despair, "that they will cause me to be arrested—that they will get me hanged! There, go to my wife, who is quite ill."

"Broussel! Broussel!" bawled the crowd: "long live Broussel! a surgeon for Broussel!"

They made such a noise, that what Broussel foresaw came to pass: a platoon of guards, with their crossed muskets, cleared the street of this really inoffensive crowd; but at the first cry of "The guard! the soldiers!" Broussel, who feared that they might consider him the instigator of the tumult, bundled into bed, all dressed as he was.

Thanks to this clearance, old Gervaise, after having been told three times, shut the street door; but scarcely had it been closed, and Gervaise had gone up again to her master, when there was a loud knock at this door.

Madame Broussel, having recovered her senses, was taking her husband's shoes off at the foot of the bed, and trembling like a leaf.

"See who is knocking," said Broussel, "and do not open, except to a friend, Gervaise."

Gervaise looked out. "It is the President Blancmesnil," said she.

"Then there is no harm," said Broussel: "open the door."

"Well, now," said the president, as he entered, "what in the world have they been doing to you, my dear Broussel? I hear that you have narrowly escaped assassination."

"The fact is, that, according to all probability, some plot has been laid against my life," replied Broussel, with a firmness which appeared quite stoical.

"My poor friend! Yes, they wished to begin with you: but our turn would soon come; and now being able to conquer us in a body, they wished to destroy us in detail."

"If I escape," said Broussel, "I will crush them under the weight of my eloquence."

"You will recover," said Blancmesnil, "and live to make them pay dear for this attack."

Madame Broussel shed oceans of tears; Gervaise wrung her hands in despair.

"What is the matter then?" said a handsome, athletic young man, rushing into the room. "My father wounded!"

"Young man, you see a victim of tyranny," said Blancmesnil, like a true Spartan.

"Oh!" cried the young man, turning towards the door, "wo to those who have touched you, my father!"

"Jacques," said the counsellor, keeping him back, "rather go for a surgeon, my good boy."

"I hear the cries of the people," said the old woman; "I have no doubt it is Friquet, who is bringing one; but, no—it is a carriage."

Blancmesnil looked out of the window. "The coadjutor," said he.

"M. le Coadjutor," repeated Broussel. "Oh, dear me! Wait

now, I will go and meet him." And the counsellor, quite forgetting his wounds, was going to rush out to meet M. de Retz, if Blancmesnil had not stopped him.

"Well, my dear Broussel," said the coadjutor on entering, "what is the matter? They talk about an ambush—an assassination? Good morning, Madame Broussel. I took up my surgeon as I passed, and have brought him with me."

"Ah, sir!" said Broussel, "how much am I indebted to you! It is true that I have been cruelly knocked over, and trodden under foot by the king's musketeers."

"Say the cardinal's," replied the coadjutor—"say Mazarin's."

"But we will make him smart for all this, be well assured—shall we not, M. Blancmesnil?"

Blancmesnil was in the act of bowing, when the door was suddenly opened by a running footman: he was followed by a servant in splendid livery, who, in a loud voice, announced the Duke de Longueville.

"What!" said Broussel, "is the duke here? What a vast honour; Ah, your excellence!"

"I am come to mourn over the lot of our brave defender," said the duke. "Are you, then, wounded, my dear counsellor?"

"If I were, your visit would cure me, your excellence."

"You are in pain, however?"

"Very great," replied Broussel.

"I have brought my physician with me," said the duke: "allow him to come in."

"Good gracious!" said Broussel.

The duke made a sign to his lacquey, who introduced a man in black.

The two doctors looked at each other.

"Ah, it is you, M. le Coadjutor?" said the duke: "the people's friends meet on their own ground."

"The tumult frightened me," replied the coadjutor, "and I hastened here: but I think that the first and most pressing affair is, for the medical man to examine our brave counsellor!"

"In your presence, gentlemen?" said Broussel, in a great fright.

'Why not, my dear Broussel? I protest that we are most anxious to know whether you are much injured."

"Oh, dear me," said Madame Broussel, "what can be the meaning of this fresh tumult?"

"They seem to be like cheers of applause," said Blancmesnil, hastening to the window.

"What can be the matter now?" said Broussel, growing pale.

"The livery of the Prince de Conti!" exclaimed Blancmesnil.

"The Prince de Conti himself, I declare!"

The coadjutor and the Duke of Longueville could scarcely restrain their laughter.

The physicians proceeded to raise Broussel's bedclothes, but he prevented them.

At this moment, in came the Prince de Conti.

"Ah, gentlemen!" said he, on seeing the coadjutor and the duke, "you have anticipated me. But you must forgive me, my dear Broussel: as soon as I heard of your accident, I thought that you might want a physician, and I went for mine on my way here. How are you, and what was this assassination, of which I hear so much!'

Broussel wished to answer, but words failed him: he was completely prostrated by the weight of the honours which had been heaped upon him.

"Come, my dear doctor, let us see," said the prince to a man in black who accompanied him.

"Gentlemen," said one of the physicians, "there must be a consultation."

'That is just as you please," answered the prince; "only, as quick as possible, examine the state of our dear counsellor."

The three physicians approached the bed. Broussel held the clothes as tight as he could; but, in spite of all his struggles, they uncovered and examined him. There was only one bruise on the arm, and another on the thigh.

The three doctors looked at each other, not understanding why

three of the most skilful and learned men of the faculty in Paris had been called in for such a pitiful case.

"Well?" said the coadjutor.

"Well?" inquired the duke.

"Well?" re-echoed the prince.

"We hope that the accident will have no serious consequences," said one of the physicians: "we will retire into the adjoining room, to draw up our prescription."

"Broussel! news of Broussel!" roared out the people: "how is Broussel?"

The coadjutor hurried to the window. At his appearance there was a dead silence.

"My friends," said he, "cheer up again. M. Broussel is out of danger; and yet his wound is a serious one, and he requires repose."

The cries of "Long live Broussel! Long live the coadjutor," immediately resounded through the street.

The Duke de Longueville was jealous, and went also to the window.

"Long live M. de Longueville!" was immediately the cry.

"My friends," said the duke, waving his hand, "retire peaceably, and do not give our enemies the triumph of a disturbance."

"Very good, duke," said Broussel from his bed: "that is what I call speaking like a good Frenchman."

"Yes, gentlemen Parisians," said the Prince de Conti, going in his turn to the window, to have some share of the applause—"yes, M. Broussel entreats you. Besides, he needs repose, and the noise might do him harm."

"Long live the Prince de Conti!" roared out the multitude.

The prince bowed.

All three then took leave of the counsellor; and the crowd, which they had dismissed in his name, became their escort. They were on the quays, whilst Broussel was still engaged bowing.

The old servant-maid, perfectly astounded, looked at her master with admiration. The counsellor was grown a foot taller in her eyes.

"There! see what it is to serve one's country conscientiously," said Broussel, with vast satisfaction.

The physicians came out, after an hour's deliberation, and ordered the contusions to be bathed with salt and water.

The whole livelong day there was a complete procession of carriages. The entire fronde left their names at Broussel's house.

"What a magnificent triumph, my dear father," said the young man, who, not comprehending the true motive which urged all these people towards his father's house, took in sober seriousness this demonstration of the great men, the princes and their friends.

"Alas! my dear Jacques," said Broussel, "I greatly fear that I may pay pretty dearly for this same triumph; and I am much mistaken, if M. Mazarin is not, at this very moment, laying some plan requite the annoyance I cause him."

Friquet returned at midnight: he had not been able to find a surgeon.

CHAPTER XXX.

FOUR OLD FRIENDS PREPARE THEMSELVES FOR A MEETING.

"Well, now," said Porthos, who was seated in the court-yard of the hotel de la Chevrette, to d'Artagnan, who had just returned from the Palais Cardinal with a lengthened face and a dissatisfied expression of countenance—"Well, did he receive you ill, then, my brave d'Artagnan?"

"Faith, and he did then. Positively he is an ugly beast, that man! What are you eating there, Porthos?"

"Why, you may see, I am soaking biscuit in a glass of Spanish wine. You had better follow my example."

"You are quite right. Here, Gimblou, a glass!"

The waiter apostrophized by this euphoneous name, brought the glass, and d'Artagnan sat down by his friend.

"Well, how did all this happen?"

"Why, you understand, there was only one way of telling the thing. I entered; and he looked askance at me. I shrugged my shoulders, and said to him,

"'Well your excellence, we were not the strongest party.'

"'Yes, I know that,' said he, 'but give me the details.'

"You understand, Porthos, that I could not give him the details, without mentioning our friends; and to name them was to destroy them."

"Yes, by Jove!"

"'Your excellence,' said I, 'there were fifty of them, and we were but two.'

"'Yes,' he replied, 'but that did not prevent some pistol-shots from being exchanged, as I have heard.'

"'The fact is,' said I, 'there were a few charges of powder burnt on both sides.'

"'And the swords saw daylight, did they not?' he added.

"'That is to say, the light of the night, your excellence,' I replied.

"'Ah, then, I thought you had been a Gascon, my dear sir,' continued the cardinal.

"'I am only Gascon when I succeed, your excellence,' said I.

"The answer pleased him, for he began to laugh.

"'This will teach me,' said he, 'to give better horses to my guards; for if they had been able to follow you, and if they had done as much as you and your friend, you would have been able to keep your word, and would have brought him back, dead or alive.'"

"Well, now, that does not seem bad, after all," said Porthos.

"Oh, no, my dear friend; but it is the manner in which it was said. It is incredible," broke off d'Artagnan, "what a quantity of wine these biscuits absorb: they are regular sponges. Gimblou, another bottle!"

The bottle was brought with a promptitude which proved the consideration in which d'Artagnan was held by the establishment. He then continued:—

"Therefore, I was just going away, when he recalled me.

"'You had three horses, either killed or foundered,' he demanded.

"'Yes, your excellence.'

"'How much were they worth?'"

"But," said Porthos, "that seems a pretty good motion, though."

"'A thousand pistoles,' I replied."

"A thousand pistoles?" said Porthos. "Oh, oh! that is a large sum; and, if he knew anything of horses, he ought to have haggled a little."

"He had a good mind to do so, the skinflint; for he gave a tremendous start, and looked hard at me. But I answered his look. Then he understood me; and, putting his hand into a desk, he drew forth some bills on the Lyons bank."

"For a thousand pistoles?"

"Yes, for that sum exactly, the stingy fellow—not for one sous more."

"And have you got them?"

"There they are."

"Faith, now, I think that he has acted with great propriety," said Porthos.

"Propriety! With men who have not only just ris'ed their lives, but who, moreover, have done him a great service!"

"A great service! and what is it?" demanded Porthos.

"Why, it appears that I have almost annihilated a parliamentary counsellor."

"What, that little dark man, whom you upset at the corner of the cemetery of St. Jean?"

"Exactly so, my dear fellow. Well, he annoyed him; and, unfortunately, I did not squeeze him quite flat: it seems that he is likely to recover, and to annoy him again."

"There, now," said Porthos; "and I must distress my horse, who would have gone right on to him. But I will take care another time."

"He ought to have paid me for the counsellor—a mean fellow!"

"But, if he was not quite crushed?" said Porthos.

"Ah! Richelieu would have said—'five hundred crowns for the counsellor!' But let us not talk any more about it. How much did those horses cost you, Porthos?"

"Ah, my friend, if poor Mousqueton were here, he would tell you to a livre, a sous, and a denier."

"Never mind: tell me within ten crowns."

"Why, Vulcan and Bayard stood me in about two hundred pistoles each; and putting Phœbus at a hundred and fifty, I believe that we shall come pretty near the mark."

"Then there remains four hundred and fifty pistoles," said d'Artagnan, very well satisfied.

"Yes," said Porthos, "but there are the accoutrements."

"That's true, by Jove! And what do you put them at?"

"Why, say a hundred pistoles for the three."

"Let them be a hundred pistoles," said d'Artagnan: "there then remains three hundred and fifty pistoles."

Porthos nodded an assent.

"Let us give the odd fifty to our hostess, for all our expenses here," said d'Artagnan, "and divide the three hundred."

"Let us divide them," said Porthos.

"A paltry affair!" muttered d'Artagnan, putting up the notes.

"Heu!" said Porthos, "it is always the case. But tell me, then?"

'What?'

"Did he not mention me in any way?"

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed d'Artagnan, who was afraid of discouraging his friend, by saying that the cardinal had not breathed a syllable about him, "he said—"

"He said?" repeated Porthos.

"Stay—I want to recal his very words—he said, 'as for your friend, tell him that he may sleep on both sides of his head.'"

"Good!" said Porthos: "that means, plain enough, that he is determined to make me a baron."

At this moment it struck nine o'clock. D'Artagnan started.

"Ah! it is true," said Porthos, "it is now striking nine; and at ten, you remember, we have our appointment at the Place Royale."

"Hold your tongue, Porthos!" exclaimed d'Artagnan, with a gesture of impatience; "do not recal this recollection to me:

it is that which has made me so sulky since yesterday. I will not go."

"And why not?" demanded Porthos.

"Because it is most painful to me to meet again the two men who caused the failure of our enterprise."

"And yet," replied Porthos, "neither one nor the other had the advantage. I had still one loaded pistol; and you were opposite each other, with your swords in your hands."

"Yes," said d'Artagnan, "but if this appointment conceals something—"

"Oh!" said Porthos, "you cannot think so, d'Artagnan."

It was true, d'Artagnan did not think Athos capable of employing such a stratagem, but he sought some excuse for not going to the rendezvous.

"We must go," said the proud lord of de Bracieux, "otherwise they will think that we were afraid. Ah! my dear friend, we faced fifty enemies on the high road—we may therefore well face two friends on the Place Royale."

"Yes, yes," said d'Artagnan, "I know that; but they engaged with the princes without giving us any intimation of it. Athos and Aramis have played a game with me which alarms me. We yesterday discovered the truth; and what can be the use of going to-day to learn any more about it?"

"Then you really distrust them?" said Porthos

"I certainly distrust Aramis since he has become an abbé. You cannot imagine, my dear fellow, what he has become. He sees us standing in the way by which he might become a bishop, and probably would not be sorry to extinguish us."

"Ah! as regards Aramis, it is another thing,' said Porthos, "and I should not be surprised at it."

"M. de Beaufort might perhaps endeavour to arrest us."

"Bah! Why, he had us in his power, and let us go. Besides, let us put ourselves on our guard; let us arm ourselves, and take Planchet, with his carbine."

"Planchet is a frondeur," said d'Artagnan.

"The plague take these civil wars!" said Porthos; "one can

no longer depend either on his friends or his lacqueys. Ah, if poor Mousqueton were here! There is a fellow who will never forsake me."

"Yes, whilst you are rich. It is not the civil war, my dear fellow, which disunites us: it is, that we are no longer only twenty years old—it is, that the pure and loyal ebullitions of youth have passed away, and have been succeeded by the paltry cares of interest, the breath of ambition, and the secret counsels of egotism. Yes, you are right, Porthos: let us go, but let us go well armed. If we were not to go, they would say that we were afraid."

"Halloo, Planchet!" cried d'Artagnan.

Planchet made his appearance.

"Get the horses saddled, and take your carbine."

"But first, sir, tell me against whom we are going?"

"We are not going against any one," said d'Artagnan: "it is a simple measure of precaution, in case we should be attacked."

"Do you know, sir, that an attempt has been made upon the life of the good counsellor Broussel, the father of the people?"

"Ah, really!" said d'Artagnan.

"Yes, but he has been well avenged; for he was carried home on the arms of the people; and, since yesterday, his house has never been empty. He has been visited by the coadjutor, the Duke de Longueville, and the Prince de Conti. Madame de Chevreuse and Madame de Vendôme have left their names at his house; and now, when he likes—"

"Well? when he likes—"

Planchet began to sing:

"A breeze of the Fronde
Did this morning begin:
It roared and it groaned
Against Mazarin—
That breeze of the Fronde
The morning brought in!"

"I do not wonder now," said d'Artagnan in a low voice to Porthos, "that Mazarin would have been more pleased had I crushed this counsellor to atoms."

"You understand, therefore, sir," said Planchet, "that if it were for such an expedition as was formed against M. Broussel that you wished me to take my carbine—"

"No, no; be quite easy about that. But who told you all these circumstances?"

"Who? I have them from good authority, sir: I received them from Friquet."

"From Friquet?" said d'Artagnan: "I know that name."

"He is the son of M. de Broussel's servant-maid—a rogue, who, I answer for it, will not, in any disturbance, give his share to the dogs."

"Is he not one of the young choristers at Notre-Dame?" inquired d'Artagnan."

"Yes, that's it—a protegé of Bazin's."

"Ah, I know," said d'Artagnan; "and also the waiter at a wine-shop, in the rue de Calandre?"

"Exactly so."

"What can you have to do with this monkey?" said Porthos.

"Oh," said d'Artagnan, "he gave me some good information, and may possibly, on occasion, give me more."

"To you, who were very near annihilating his master?"

"And who should tell him that?"

"Ah, that is true!"

At this precise time, Athos and Aramis were entering Paris by the faubourg St. Antoine. They had taken refreshment on their route, and were hurrying forward that they might not be too late for their appointment. Bazin alone accompanied them. Grimaud, it may be remembered, had remained to take care of Mousqueton, and was to go directly to the young Viscount de Bragelonne, who was proceeding to join the army in Flanders.

"Now," said Athos, "we must enter some hotel to put on a peaceful garb, to lay aside our pistols and swords, and to disarm our lacquey."

"Oh, by no means, my dear count; and in this you will not only allow me to be of a different opinion, but also to endeavour to bring you over to mine."

"And why so?"

"Because we are going to a hostile meeting."

"What do you mean, Aramis?"

"That the Place Royale is neither more nor less than the sequel of the Vendomois road."

"What, our friends—"

"Are become our most dangerous enemies. Athos, believe me you must distrust them; and, more than all, distrust yourself."

"Oh, my dear d'Herblay!"

"Who can say that d'Artagnan has not thrown the blame of his defeat on us, and that he has not given information to the cardinal? Who can say that the cardinal will not take advantage of this appointment to arrest us?"

"What, Aramis, do you think that d'Artagnan and Porthos would sanction such an infamous proceeding?"

"Between friends, my dear Athos, you are perfectly right: it would be disgraceful; but, between enemies, it is only a stratagem."

Athos crossed his arms, and his beautiful head fell upon his chest.

"What would you have, Athos?" said Aramis: "men are thus constituted, and are not for ever twenty years old. We have, as you know, cruelly wounded that self-love which blindly actuates d'Artagnan in everything he does. He has been foiled. Did you not hear his despair on the road? As for Porthos, perhaps his barony depended upon the success of that expedition. Well, he met us on the road, and will not be a baron this time. Who can say but that this famous barony has something to do with our interview of this evening? Let us take our precautions, Athos."

"But if they came unarmed, what a disgrace would it be to us, Aramis!"

"Oh! be quite easy, my dear fellow. I answer for it, that that will not be the case. Besides, we have an excuse. We are just come off a journey, and we are rebels."

"An excuse for us—we hunt up an excuse to d'Artagnan and Porthos! Oh, Aramis, Aramis," continued Athos, with a melancholy shake of the head, "by my soul, you make me the most

wretched of men! You disenchant a heart not yet dead to friendship! Hear me, Aramis:—I protest that I would prefer that you tore open my breast. Do you go as you like, Aramis. As for me, I will go unarmed."

"No; because I will not allow you to go in that manner. It is no longer one man—it is no longer Athos—it is not even the Count de la Fère that you will betray by such a weakness, but it is the entire party to which you belong, and which confides in you."

"Well, let it be as you will," said Athos, in a mournful tone.

And they pursued their melancholy route.

Scarcely had they reached the grated gates of the desolate place, by the rue du Pas de la Mule, before they perceived three horsemen, under the arcade at the entrance of the rue St. Catherine. It was d'Artagnan and Porthos, who were proceeding, enveloped in their cloaks, which were raised by the ends of their swords. Planchet came behind them, with his carbine on his thigh.

Athos and Aramis dismounted on seeing d'Artagnan and Porthos, who also followed their example. D'Artagnan remarked that the three horses, instead of being held by Bazin, were fastened to the rings under the arcades. He therefore ordered Planchet to do the same.

Then they advanced to meet each other, followed by their lacqueys, and bowing with formal politeness.

"Where shall we converse, gentlemen?" said Athos, who perceived that many persons stopped to see whether one of those famous duels was not about to take place, which yet lived in the memory of the Parisians, and more especially of those who inhabited the Place Royale.

"The gate is fastened," said Aramis; "but if these gentlemen like the fresh air under the trees, and an inviolable sclitude, I will procure the key from the hotel de Rohan, and it will suit us excellently well."

D'Artagnan looked earnestly at the dark obscurity of the place, and Porthos thrust his head through two of the bars, to fathom its shades.

"Should you prefer any other place," said Athos, with his noble and persuasive voice, "only choose for yourselves."

"This will be the best spot possible, I believe," said d'Artagnan, "if M. d'Herblay can procure the key."

Aramis immediately went off, first warning Athos not to remain within reach of d'Artagnan and Porthos. But Athos only answered by a disdainful smile, and made a step towards his old friends, who remained immoveable.

Aramis rapped at the hotel de Rohan, and soon reappeared with a man, who was saying—

"And do you swear it to me, sir?"

"There," said Aramis, giving him a louis

"Then you will not swear, sir?" said the porter, shaking his head.

"Why, can a person take his oath about anything?" replied Aramis. "I only declare to you, that, at this present moment, these gentlemen are our friends."

"Yes, certainly," coldly replied Athos, d'Artagnan, and Porthos.

D'Artagnan had heard this dialogue, and understood it

"Do you see?" said he to Porthos.

"What is it that I am to see?"

"That he did not wish to swear."

"Swear—about what?"

"That man wished Aramis to swear that we were not going on the Place Royale, to fight."

"And Aramis would not swear?"

"No."

"Attention, then!"

Athos did not lose sight of them whilst thus conversing. Aramis opened the gate, and drew on one side to let D'Artagnan and Porthos enter. As he entered, d'Artagnan caught the handle of his sword in the bars of the gate, and was obliged to remove his cloak. In doing this, he also discovered the shining butt of his pistols, which a stray moonbeam illumined.

"Do you see?" said Aramis, touching Athos's shoulder with one hand, and with the other pointing to the arms which d'Artagnan bore at his girdle.

"Alas! yes," replied Athos, with a profound sigh. And he went in the third. Aramis entered the last, and locked the gate behind him. The two lacqueys remained outside: but, as if they also had distrusted each other, they kept at a distance.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE PLACE ROYALE.

They walked in profound silence to the very centre of the Place; but as, just at this moment, the moon issued from behind a cloud, they reflected that, in this exposed situation, they might be easily seen: they therefore went under the lime trees, where the shade was deeper.

Benches were here scattered about. The four gentlemen stopped before one of them, and, at a sign from Athos, d'Artagnan and Porthos sat down, whilst Athos and Aramis remained standing before them.

After the lapse of some moments, during which each of them felt the embarrassment of commencing an explanation—

"Gentlemen," said Athos, "a proof of the strength of our ancient friendship is given by our presence at this interview. Not one of us has failed: no one, therefore, has any reproaches to make."

"Listen, count," said d'Artagnan: "instead of paying us compliments, which perhaps none of us merit, let us explain ourselves, like frank and honourable men."

"I demand nothing more," replied Athos. "I know that you are frank: speak, then, with candour. Have you anything for which to reproach me or the Abbé d'Herblay?"

"Yes," said d'Artagnan. "When I had the honour of seeing you at the chateau of Bragelonne, I was the bearer of propositions which you thoroughly understood. Instead of answering me as a friend, you played with me as if I were a child; and this friendship, of which you boast, has not been shattered by the shock of our

swords yesterday, but by your dissimulation at your own chateau."

"D'Artagnan!" said Athos, in a voice of soft reproach.

"You demanded candour," replied d'Artagnan, "and I give it you. You ask my opinion, and I tell it you. And now I have the same at the service of M. l'Abbé d'Herblay. I acted the same towards you, and you deceived me in the same manner."

"Really, sir, your conduct is very extraordinary," said Aramis: "you came to make me some propositions; but *did* you make them?" No; you sounded me—that was all. Well, what did I say to you? That Mazarin was a pitiful rascal, and that I would not serve him—that is actually the whole! Did I tell you that I would not serve another? On the contrary, I gave you to understand, I think, that I supported the princes. We even, if I am not mistaken, joked most agreeably, on the probable chance of your receiving an order from the cardinal to arrest me. Were you a party man? Without doubt you were. Well, might not we be party men also? You had your secret, as we had ours. We did not exchange them: so much the better: it proves that we know how to keep our secrets."

"I reproach you for nothing," said d'Artagnan: "it is only because the Count de la Fère has spoken of friendship, that I examine your conduct."

"And what do you think of it?" demanded Aramis, haughtily.

The blood instantly mounted to d'Artagnan's temples. Rising up, he replied: "I think that it is that of a pupil of the Jesuits."

On seeing d'Artagnan rise, Porthos had also risen. The four men therefore now stood in a menacing attitude, fronting each other. At d'Artagnan's answer, Aramis made a motion as if to put his hand to his sword. Athos arrested him.

"D'Artagnan," said he, "you come furious from last night's adventure. I had thought your heart so noble, that a friendship of twenty years' duration would have resisted a momentary wound to your self-love. Come, tell me plainly, do you really think that you have somewhat for which to reproach me? If I am in fault, d'Artagnan, I will confess my fault."

The serious and harmonious voice of Athos had yet its ancient

influence on d'Artagnan; whilst that of Aramis, become sharp and harsh in his ill-humour, always irritated him. Therefore he replied to Athos:

"I thought, M. le Count, that you had a secret to confide to me at the chateau de Bragelonne, and that that gentleman," pointing to Aramis, "had one to trust me with at his convent. I would not then have undertaken an adventure in which you threw yourselves into the breach. Yet, because I was discreet, it was not necessary to take me for a complete fool. If I had wished closely to examine the different persons admitted by M. d'Herblay, by means of his ladder of ropes, and his ladder of wood, I might have been obliged to disclose it."

"What are you talking about?" exclaimed Aramis, pale with anger at the secret doubt, whether, having been watched by d'Artagnan, he had not been seen with Madame de Longueville.

"I talk about what concerns me, and I pretend not to have seen what does not concern me. But I hate hypocrites, and in that category do I place musketeers who become abbés, and abbés who become musketeers; and," he added, turning towards Porthos, "here is a gentleman who is of the same opinion as myself."

Porthos, who had not yet spoken, replied by only one word and a gesture. He said "Yes," and put his hand to his sword.

Aramis gave a bound backwards, and drew his weapon. D'Artagnan stooped down, ready to attack, or to defend himself.

Then Athos stretched out his hand, with that gesture of supreme command which belonged to himself alone, slowly drew forth his sword and the scabbard at the same time, snapped off the blade in its sheath, by breaking it against his knee, and threw the two pieces aside. Then turning towards Aramis—"Aramis," said he, "break your sword."

Aramis hesitated.

"You must," said Athos. Then, in a lower and softer voice—"I wish it."

Aramis, more pale than ever, but vanquished by this gesture, conquered by this voice, now broke the flexible blade between his hands, crossed his arms, and waited, boiling with rage.

This movement made d'Artagnan and Porthos recoil. D'Artagnan did not draw his sword; Porthos sheathed his.

"Never," said Athos, slowly elevating his right hand towards heaven—"never, I swear it before that God, who sees and hears us in the solemn stillness of this night—never shall my sword touch yours, never shall my eye cast a glance of anger at you—never shall my heart heave a throb of hatred towards you! We have lived together, we have hated and loved together, we have shed and mingled our blood, and perhaps I might yet add, that there is a bond between us even stronger than friendship—perhaps there is the compact of crime. For we all four judged, condemned, and executed a human being, whom we had perhaps no right to cut off from this world, although she appeared to belong to hell, rather than to this world. D'Artagnan, I have always loved you as my son. Porthos, we slept side by side for ten years. Aramis is your brother, as he is mine; for Aramis has always loved you as I do now, and as I shall always love you. What can Mazarin be to us, who vanquished the hand and heart of such a man as Richelieu? What can any prince be to us, who established the crown on a queen's head? D'Artagnan, pardon me for having crossed my sword with you? Aramis does the same to Porthos. And, now, hate me if you can: but I swear to you, that, in spite of your hatred, I shall never cease to esteem and love you. Now repeat my words, Aramis; and after that, if they wish it, and if you wish it, we will quit our old friends for ever!"

There was a moment of solemn silence, which was broken by Aramis.

"I swear," said he, with a calm front and a loyal look, but with a voice in which a last quiver of emotion was perceptible—"*I* swear, that I have no longer any enmity towards those who were my friends. I swear, that I regret having touched your sword, Porthos. I swear, in fine, that mine shall not only never again be directed against your bosom, but that, for the future, no single remnant of a hostile sentiment against you shall remain hidden in my most inward thought!—Come, Athos."

Athos made a movement as if to retire.

"Oh, no, no! do not go!" exclaimed d'Artagnan, carried away by one of those irresistible ebullitions which betrayed the warmth of his temper, and the natural rectitude of his soul—"do not go—for I also must take an oath. I swear that I would give the last drop of my blood, and the last morsel of my body, to gain the esteem of such a man as you are, Athos, and the friendship of a man like Aramis!" And he threw himself into Athos's arms.

"My son!" said Athos, pressing him to his heart.

"And I," said Porthos, "do not swear, but—sacrebleu!—I am choking! If I was compelled to fight you, I verily believe that I should let myself be run through and through, for I never loved any but you in the world!" And the honest Porthos threw himself into Aramis's arms in a paroxysm of tears.

"My friends," said Athos, "this is exactly what I expected from such hearts as yours. Yes, I have said it, and I repeat it—our destinies are irrevocably united, although we may follow different paths. I respect your opinion, d'Artagnan, and your conviction, Porthos; but although we contend on opposite sides, let us sacredly guard our friendship. Ministers, princes, and kings will pass by like a torrent, and civil war like a conflagration; but I have a presentiment that we shall remain."

"Yes," said d'Artagnan, "let us always be musketeers, and let us always guard, as our only flag, that famous napkin which the great cardinal had embroidered with the three fleurs-de-lis."

"Yes," said Aramis, "cardinalists or frondeurs, what do we care! Let us be good seconds to each other in all our duels, devoted friends in all serious matters, and joyous friends in all our pleasures and amusements."

"And every time that we may chance to meet in the shock of battle," said Athos, "at the sole word, 'Place Royale,' let us change our swords to the left hand, and stretch out the right to each other, were it in the midst of carnage."

"You speak admirably," said Porthos.

"You are the greatest of men," cried d'Artagnan, "and surpass us immeasurably."

Athos gave a smile of ineffable joy. "It is therefore decided," said he. "Come, gentlemen, give me your hands. Are you in some measure Christians?"

"By Jove, yes!" said d'Artagnan.

"We will be so at any rate for this occasion, to remain faithful to our oath," said Aramis.

"Ah, I am ready to swear by anything you wish," said Porthos, "even by Mahomet! The devil take me if I was ever so happy in my life as I am at this moment!"

And the good-hearted Porthos again wiped his eyes.

"Has any one of you got a cross?" demanded Athos.

Porthos and d'Artagnan looked at each other, and shook their heads, like men who had been taken rather unawares.

Aramis smiled, and drew from his bosom a diamond cross, suspended by a string of pearls. "Here is one," said he.

"Very well!" replied Athos, "let us swear on this cross—which, in spite of its materials, is still a cross—let us swear to be united, in spite of everything, and for ever; and may this oath, not only bind ourselves, but even our descendants! Does this oath suit you?"

"Yes," they all said with one voice.

"Ah, traitor!" whispered d'Artagnan, in Aramis's ear—"you have made us swear on the crucifix of a female frondeur."

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE FERRY ON THE OISE.

We hope that our reader has not entirely forgotten the young traveller, whom we left on the road to Flanders.

Raoul, on losing sight of his guardian, whom he had left following him with his eyes opposite the royal cathedral, had spurred on his

horse, first, to escape his melancholy thoughts, and then to conceal from Olivain the emotion which agitated his countenance.

But an hour's rapid progress quickly dissipated the clouds which overshadowed the youth's fertile imagination. That yet unknown pleasure of complete freedom—a pleasure which has its charm, even for those who have never felt the weight of dependence—gilded for Raoul the heaven and the earth, and, more than all, that distant and azure-tinted horizon of life which is called the future.

And yet he found out, after several attempts at conversation with Olivain, that long days, passed in this manner, would be very dull; and the count's tongue, so soft, persuasive, an interesting, came back to his memory, when he passed through any towns concerning which no one could give him the valuable information which he might have drawn from Athos, the most intelligent and the most amusing of guides.

Another recollection also saddened Raoul's heart. On reaching Louvres, he had seen, almost hidden by a screen of poplars, a small chateau, which had so forcibly recalled that of La Vallière to his memory, that he had stopped nearly ten minutes to look at it; and had resumed his journey sighing, and without answering Olivain who had respectfully questioned him as to the cause of his earnest attention. The appearance of external objects is a mysterious conductor, which corresponds with the fibres of memory, and makes them vibrate, sometimes in spite of ourselves; and this thread being once touched, like that of Ariadne, conducts to a labyrinth of thoughts, where one is lost in following that shadow of the past, which is called memory. Now, the sight of this chateau had sent Raoul back fifty leagues to the west, and had made him trace back his life, from the moment when he took leave of the little Louise, to that when he saw her for the first time; and each clump of oaks, each weathercock standing on the top of a tiled roof, reminded him, that, instead of returning to the friends of his childhood, he every moment went further from them, and that, perhaps, he had even left them for ever.

With swelling heart and heavy head, he commanded Olivain to take the horses to a small inn, which he saw by the road side, about

half a musket-shot from the spot they had reached. As for himself, he dismounted, and remained under a beautiful group of horse-chestnuts, in full blossom, around which multitudes of bees were buzzing, and desired Olivain to order the host to bring paper and ink to a table which he saw there, all ready for him to write on.

Olivain obeyed; whilst Raoul sat down, leaning his elbow on the table, with his eyes wandering vaguely over the charming landscape, sprinkled with green fields, and clusters of trees, that from time to time scattered their blossoms, which fell on his hair like snowflakes.

Raoul had been there about ten minutes, and been about five lost in a reverie, when he saw a jolly, rubicund figure, with a napkin about his body and one on his arm, and a white nightcap on his head, coming towards him, with pen, ink, and paper in his hand.

"Aha!" said this apparition, "it is plain that all gentlemen have the same ideas; for it is not a quarter of an hour since a young nobleman, well mounted, as you are, of lofty air, like yourself, and about the same age, halted under this cluster of trees, and made me bring this table, and this chair, and dined here, with an old gentleman, who looked like his tutor, off a pasty, of which they did not leave one morsel, and a bottle of old Mâcon wine, of which they did not leave one drop. But fortunately we have some more of the same wine, and pasties of equal goodness; and if you, sir, will give your orders—"

"No, my friend," said Raoul, smiling, "I thank you. At present I merely want what I have asked for; only, I hope the ink is black, and the pen good; and, on these conditions, I will give the price of the wine for the ink, and of the pasty for the pen."

"Very well, sir," said the host, "I will give the wine and the pasty to your servant, and in this way you will get the pen and ink into the bargain."

"Do as you like," said Raoul, who began his apprenticeship with this peculiar class of society, which, when there were robbers on the high roads, were connected with them, and which, now there are no longer any robbers, very worthily supplies their place.

The host, made easy on this head, laid the pen, ink, and paper,

on the table. By chance the pen was a tolerable one, and Raoul began to write.

The host had remained standing before him, and looked with involuntary admiration at that charming countenance, so serious, and yet so gentle. Beauty always has been, and always will be, a queen.

"He is not such a guest as I had just now," said the host to Olivain, who came to see if Raoul wanted anything: "your young master has no appetite."

"My young master had plenty of appetite three days ago," said Olivain: "but what would you have? He lost it the day before yesterday."

And Olivain and the host went to the inn—Olivain, as is usual with lacqueys who are happy in their situations, recounting all he could concerning the young gentleman.

In the meantime Raoul was writing—

"Sir,"

"After proceeding four hours, I stop to write to you; for you make me forget myself every moment, and I am constantly ready to turn my head to answer you, as if you were speaking to me. I was so completely stunned at your departure, and so greatly distressed at our separation, that I very feebly expressed all the tenderness and gratitude I felt for you. You will excuse me, sir; for your heart is so generous, that you must have understood all that passed in mine. Write to me, sir, I beseech you, for your counsels constitute a part of my existence; and besides, if I may say so, I am uneasy: it appeared to me that you were preparing yourself for some perilous expedition, on which I dared not question you, for you told me nothing about it. Therefore you may imagine that I much want to hear from you. Since you are no longer near me, I am in continual fear of doing wrong. You were my main support, and now I protest that I find myself very solitary.

"Will you be so kind, sir, when you receive any news from Blois, to send me a few words concerning my little friend, Mademoiselle de la Vallière, whose health, you are aware, gave us some anxiety at our departure? You understand, my dear guardian, how

valuable, indeed indispensable, to me, is the recollection of the time that I passed with you. I hope that sometimes you will also think of me; and if you should miss me at certain moments, if you should experience some slight regret at my absence, I shall feel overwhelmed with joy, on thinking that you have perceived my affection and devotion to you, and that I have been able to make you estimate them, during the time that I have had the happiness of living with you."

This letter being finished, Raoul felt himself more easy. He looked to see whether the host and Olivain were watching him, and then impressed a kiss on the paper—a mute and touching caress, which the heart of Athos was capable of divining on opening the letter.

In the meantime, Olivain had drank his bottle, and eaten his pasty. The horses were also refreshed; and Raoul, having beckoned the host to come to him, threw a crown upon the table, remounted his horse, and put his letter into the post at Senlis.

The repose that the horses and their riders had taken allowed them to continue their journey without stopping. At Verberie, Raoul ordered Olivain to gain some information concerning the young gentleman who preceded them. He had been seen to pass by about three-quarters of an hour before; but, as the innkeeper had before said, he was well mounted, and travelled at a good pace.

"We will endeavour to overtake this gentleman," said Raoul to Olivain. "Like ourselves, he is going to the army, and it would be most agreeable society for us."

It was four o'clock in the afternoon when Raoul reached Compiegne. He there made a good dinner, and again inquired about the young gentleman who was before him. He had stopped, like Raoul, at the hotel *de la Cloche et de la Bouteille*, which was the best inn at Compiegne, and had continued his journey, saying that he should sleep at Noyon.

"Let us sleep at Noyon also," said Raoul.

"Sir," answered Olivain, very respectfully, "allow me to observe, that we have already greatly fatigued the horses. It would be a better plan, I think, to sleep here, and to set off in good time in the

morning. Eighteen leagues are quite sufficient for a first day's march."

"The Count de la Fère wishes me to make haste," said Raoul, "and wants me to join the prince on the fourth morning: let us therefore push on to Noyon, which will be a day's march equal to what we made on coming up from Blois to Paris. We shall get there at eight o'clock; the horses will have the whole night to rest; and to-morrow, at five in the morning, we will renew our journey."

Olivain dared not resist this determination; but he followed murmuring. "Go on, go on," said he between his teeth, "and expend your fire the first day. To-morrow, instead of a journey of twenty leagues, you will make one of ten; after to-morrow, one of five; and in three days you will be in bed. Then you will be obliged to rest. But all these young gentlemen are such braggadocais."

It is quite perceptible that Olivain had not been brought up in the school of Planchet and Grimaud.

Raoul really felt himself fatigued, but he wished to try his power. Educated in the principles of Athos, and quite certain of having heard him talk a thousand times of marches of twenty-five hours, he did not wish to be inferior to his model. D'Artagnan, also, that iron man, who appeared to be formed of nerves and muscles, had struck him with admiration.

He went on, therefore, urging his horse forward more and more, in spite of Olivain's observations, and following a charming little by-road which led to a ferry, and which shortened the distance a league, as he had been told; when, on reaching the summit of a slight hill, he perceived the river before him. A small body of horsemen was standing on the bank, ready to embark. Raoul did not doubt that this was the gentleman and his escort. He called out to them, but the distance prevented his being heard. Then Raoul put his horse, tired as he was, to the gallop; but a slight undulation of ground soon concealed the travellers from his view, and when he reached another elevation, the ferry-boat had left the bank, and was gliding to the other side.

Raoul, seeing that he could not arrive in time to pass the ferry with the travellers, stopped for Olivain.

At this moment a cry was heard, which seemed to come from the river. Raoul turned to the quarter from whence it proceeded, and putting his hand before his eyes, which were dazzled by the setting sun—

"Olivain," said he, "what do I see down there?"

A second cry resounded, more piercing than the first.

"Oh, sir!" cried Olivain, "the ferry rope is broken, and the boat is driving away with the stream. But what do I see struggling in the water?"

"Oh! it certainly is a horse and a rider," exclaimed Raoul, fixing his eyes on a part of the river which was splendidly illumined by the rays of the sun.

"They are sinking," cried out Olivain.

It was indeed true; and Raoul began to be convinced that an accident had happened, and that a man was drowning. He gave his horse his head, struck the spurs into his flanks, and the animal, urged by the pain, and feeling his freedom, leaped over a kind of railing which surrounded the place of embarcation, and fell into the river, driving far before him whole floods of foam.

"Ah, sir!" cried Olivain, "what in the world are you doing?"

Raoul directed his horse towards the drowning man. And, after all, it was an exercise with which he was perfectly familiar. Brought up on the banks of the Loire, he had, it may be said, been cradled on its waves. A hundred times had he crossed it on horseback, a thousand by swimming. Athos, foreseeing the time when he should make a soldier of the viscount, had indurated him by these exercises.

"Oh, dear me!" cried Olivain, in utter despair, "what would the count say, if he saw you now?"

"He would have done just the same himself," said Raoul, vigorously urging his horse forward.

"But I—I!—what am I to do?" cried Olivain, in great agitation, on the bank of the river—"how am I to pass?"

"Leap, coward!" exclaimed Raoul, still swimming. Then

addressing the traveller, who was struggling about twenty paces from him—"Courage, sir," said he, "courage! help is at hand."

Olivain advanced, retreated, made his horse rear, and turn round, and at last, goaded by shame, he leaped in, as Raoul had done, but crying out—"I am a dead man! We are lost!"

In the meantime the boat went rapidly down, being carried away by the stream, and the cries of those it bore were heard at a distance. A gray-haired man had cast himself from the ferry-boat into the river, and was swimming strongly towards the drowning person; yet he made but little progress, being obliged to go against the stream.

Raoul still went on, and visibly gained ground; but the horse and its rider, whom he kept in sight, were perceptibly sinking. The horse had only his nostrils above the water; and the rider, who had lost the reins in his struggles, stretched out his arms, and let his head fall back. A minute more, and all disappeared.

"Courage!" cried Raoul—"courage!"

"It is too late," murmured the young man—"too late!" The water passed above his head, and stifled his voice.

Raoul threw himself from his horse, which he left to take care of itself, and in three or four strokes was close to the gentleman. He immediately seized the horse by the bit, and raised his head above the water: the animal thus breathed more freely, and, as if it had known that assistance was come, it redoubled its efforts. Raoul at the same time laid hold of one of the young man's hands, and guided it to the mane, which it grasped with the tenacity of a drowning man. Certain that the rider would not now let go his hold, Raoul devoted all his attention to the horse, which he guided towards the opposite bank, assisting it, and encouraging it with his voice. Suddenly the animal struck upon a shallow, and touched the ground.

"Saved!" exclaimed the gray-haired man.

"Saved!" mechanically murmured the gentleman, letting himself fall from the saddle into Raoul's arms.

Raoul was not ten paces from the bank, to which he carried the gentleman, perfectly insensible, laid him on the grass, untied the

strings of his collar, and unfastened the clasps of his doublet. A minute after, the gray-haired man was by his side. Olivain had also at last managed to land, after sundry signs of the cross; and the people in the boat directed themselves as well as they could, by the aid of a pole which was by chance on board.

Gradually, thanks to the measures taken by Raoul, and the man who accompanied the young cavalier, life returned to the pale cheeks of the dying youth, who opened his eyes, at first wandering, but soon fixed on his preserver.

"Ah, sir!" he exclaimed, "it is you I was looking for. But for you, I should have been dead—three times dead."

"But you are recovering, sir," said Raoul, "and we shall all get off with a ducking."

"Oh, sir, what gratitude do we owe you!" said the gray-haired man.

"Ah, are you there, my good d'Arminges! I have frightened you enough, have I not? But it is your own fault. You were my tutor: why did you not teach me to swim better?"

"Ah, count," replied the old man, "if any misfortune had befallen you, I should never have dared to appear before the marshal again."

"But how did the thing happen?" inquired Raoul.

"In the simplest manner in the world, sir," replied he who was called count: "we had passed over about a third of the river, when the ferry-rope broke. My horse, frightened by the cries and the bustle of the boatmen, leaped into the stream. I swim but badly, and did not dare to throw myself into the river; so that, instead of aiding, I paralyzed my horse's efforts; and I was in a fair way of drowning most gallantly, when you reached me, just in the nick of time to pull me out of the water. Therefore, sir, if you have no objection, we are from henceforth united, for life and death."

"Sir," answered Raoul, "I am entirely at your service, I assure you."

"I am called the Count de Guiche," continued the cavalier; "my father is the Marshal de Grammont. And, now that you know who I am, will you do me the honour to tell me who you are?"

"I am the Viscount de Bragelonne," said Raoul, blushing that he could not name his father, as the Count de Guiche had done.

"Viscount, your countenance, your kindness, and your courage draw me towards you: you already possess all my gratitude. Let us embrace: I demand your friendship."

"Sir," said Raoul, returning the count's embrace, "I already love you with all my heart. Consider me, therefore, I beseech you, as your devoted friend."

"And now, where are you going, viscount?" inquired de Guiche.

"To the prince's army, count."

"And so am I," exclaimed the count, in a transport of joy. "Ah! so much the better; we will fire our first pistol-shot together."

"That's right," said the tutor; "love one another: you are both young, were no doubt born under the same star, and were destined to meet."

The two young men smiled with the confidence of youth.

"And now," said the tutor, "you must change your dress. The lacqueys, to whom I gave orders the moment I left the ferry-boat, must have already reached the hotel, where the linen and wine are being warmed. Come."

The young men had no objection to make to this proposition; on the contrary, they thought it an excellent one. They immediately mounted their horses, looking at and admiring each other. They were, in reality, two elegant cavaliers, with active and slender figures, noble and open countenances, mild yet proud looks, with a loyal and acute smile. De Guiche might be about eighteen years old, but he was scarcely taller than Raoul, who was only fifteen. By a spontaneous impulse they mutually held out their hands to each other, and spurring their horses, passed from the river to the hotel, side by side; the one looking on that life which he had so nearly lost, as delightful and charming; the other thanking God that he had already lived long enough to perform an action which would be pleasing to his guardian. As for Olivain, he was the only one whom this spirited exploit of his master did not completely satisfy: he

kept pulling the sleeves and skirts of his doublet, thinking that, had they halted at Compiegne, he would not only have escaped this accident, but also the cold and rheumatism which must naturally result from it.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE SKIRMISH.

The halt at Noyon was a short one, and every one slept most profoundly. Raoul had given orders to be awoke if Grimaud came; but Grimaud did not arrive.

The horses, on their part, doubtless fully appreciated the eight hours of uninterrupted rest and of abundant provender which were granted to them. The Count de Guiche was awoke at five o'clock by Raoul, who came to wish him good morning. They breakfasted in haste, and by six o'clock had already traversed two leagues.

The conversation of the young count was most interesting to Raoul; he was, therefore, a most attentive listener, and the count talked incessantly. Educated at Paris, where Raoul had only been once—at the court, which Raoul had never seen—his pranks as a page, two duels in which he had contrived to be engaged, in spite of the edicts, and, more than all, in spite of his tutor—these were circumstances inexpressibly curious to Raoul. Raoul had only been to M. Scarron's, and he told de Guiche the persons he had seen there. de Guiche knew every body: Madame de Neuillan, Mademoiselle d'Aubigné, Mademoiselle de Scudery ademoiselle Paulet, and Madame de Chevreuse. He quizzed every one with a good deal of talent; and Raoul trembled least he should also ridicule Madame de Chevreuse, for whom he felt a genuine and profound affection. But, whether from instinct, or from affection for the Duchess de Chevreuse, he praised her most amazingly; and Raoul's friendship for the count redoubled at these eulogiums.

Then came the subject of gallantry and love. On this, also,

Bragelonne had much more to hear than to tell. He listened, therefore, and fancied that he could perceive, through three or four adventures which were sufficiently transparent, that the count, like himself, concealed a secret in the bottom of his heart.

De Guiche, as we have said, had been brought up at court, and all its intrigues were well known to him. It was that court of which Raoul had heard so much from the Count de la Fère; only it had been much changed since the period when Athos had seen it. All this was therefore quite fresh to the young viscount. The count, sarcastic and clever, took a cursory view of every one in turn. He related the ancient amours of Madame de Longueville with Coligny, and his duel on the Place Royale—a duel which was fatal to him, and which Madame de Longueville saw through a window blind; her recent amours with the Prince de Marsillac, who was said to be so jealous of her, that he would willingly kill every one, and more especially the Abbé d'Herblay, her spiritual director;—the amour of the Prince of Wales with Mademoiselle, who was afterwards called the great Mademoiselle, and celebrated for her secret marriage with Lauzun. The queen herself was not spared; and the Cardinal Mazarin had also a share of his raillery.

The journey thus passed with inconceivable rapidity. The count's tutor, a man of the world, fond of good living, and, as his pupil declared, profoundly learned, often recalled to Raoul's mind the deep research, and the sharp and biting sarcasm of Athos; but as for grace, delicacy, and grandeur of appearance, no one could be compared to the Count de la Fère.

With more consideration for their horses than had been displayed on the previous day, they halted at Arras at four o'clock in the afternoon. They were approaching the scene of war, and determined to remain at that town till the morning, as parties of Spaniards sometimes took advantage of the night to make excursions, even to the outskirts of Arras.

The French army was stationed from Pont-à-Marc to Valenciennes, bearing back towards Douai. The prince himself was said to be at Bethune.

The enemy's army extended from Cassel to Courtrai; and as they

committed every species of outrage and pillage, the poor people on the frontiers left their dwellings desolate, and took refuge in the fortified towns, which promised them protection. Arras was thus encumbered with fugitives.

It was said, that a decisive battle would probably soon take place; the prince having as yet been only manœuvring, in expectation of his reinforcements, which had just reached him. The young men congratulated themselves on arriving so opportunely. They supped together, and slept in the same chamber. They were at the age of sudden friendships: they seemed to have known each other since their childhood, and fancied that it would be impossible for them ever again to separate.

The evening was passed in talking of the war. The lacqueys cleaned their arms; the young men charged their pistols, in case of a skirmish; and they arose quite in despair, having both dreamt that they had arrived too late for the battle.

In the morning, it was reported that the Prince de Condé had evacuated Bethune, to retire on Carvin, leaving, however, a garrison in the former town; but as this news was not certain, the young men determined to continue their journey towards Bethune, having the power of turning to the right on their route, and marching on Carvin.

The Count de Guiche's tutor had a thorough knowledge of the country: he therefore proposed to take a cross-road, which led between the road of Lens, and that of Bethune. At Ablain, they might procure some information. Intimation of this route was left for Grimaud, and they set off about seven o'clock in the morning.

De Guiche, who was young and impetuous, said to Raoul—"Here we are—three masters and three valets. Our valets are well armed; and yours appears to me to be a tough fellow."

"I have never seen him at work," answered Raoul; "but he is a Breton, and that promises well."

"Yes, yes," said Guiche, "and I am certain that he would use his musket on a proper occasion. As for me, I have two trusty men, who have served with my father; we are therefore six combatants. If we should fall in with a small body of partisans,

equal, or even superior to ourselves, shall we not charge them, Raoul ?"

"Yes, sir, by all means," answered Raoul.

"Halloo, young gentlemen, halloo !" cried the tutor, mingling in the conversation, "odszounds, how you are getting on ! And my instructions too, count ? Do you forget, that I have orders to conduct you safe to the prince ? Once with the army, you may get yourself killed if you like ; but here, I tell you, in quality of general of our army, that I shall command you to retreat, and turn your back at the first feather that I spy out."

Raoul and Guiche looked at each other with a smile from a corner of their eyes. The country was a good deal enclosed, and from time to time they met small bodies of the peasantry, who were retreating, driving their cattle before them, and carrying in their wagons, or their arms, their most valuable effects.

They reached Ablain without accident. There they learnt that the prince had really quitted Bethune, and had halted between Cambrin and la Venthie. They therefore went forward again, after leaving directions for Grimaud, taking a cross-road, which, in about half an hour, conducted the little troop to the banks of a small stream, that ran into the Lys.

The country was charming, intersected by valleys as green as an emerald. From time to time they came upon small copses, which bounded the road they were following. At each of these woods, to provide against any ambuscade, the tutor sent the two lacqueys forward, as scouts. The tutor and the two young men formed the main body of the army ; and Olivain, with his carbine on his knee, and his eye upon the watch, formed the rear-guard.

For some time, a wood of considerable extent had bounded the horizon : having arrived within a hundred paces of this wood, M. d'Arminges took his usual precautions, and sent the two lacqueys forward. They soon disappeared under the trees ; the young men and the tutor, laughing and talking, followed at about the distance of a hundred paces ; and Olivain kept himself at about the same distance in the rear ; when, suddenly, five or six musket-shots were heard. The tutor cried out "Halt !" The young men obeyed,

and drew up their horses. At the same moment the two lacqueys were seen, returning at full gallop.

The young men, eager to learn the cause of this firing, pushed forward to meet the lacqueys, and the tutor followed them.

"Have you been stopped?" demanded the young men, with great vivacity.

"No," replied the lacqueys, "it is even probable that we were not seen: the shots were fired about a hundred paces in advance of us, in the thickest part of the wood; and we are come back for orders."

"My advice," said M. d'Arminges, "and, if necessary, my command, is that we retreat; this wood may conceal an ambuscade."

"Did you not see anything?" said the count to the lacqueys.

"I fancied," replied one of them, "that I saw some horsemen, clothed in green, gliding into the bed of the stream."

"That's it!" said the tutor: "we have fallen in with a party of Spaniards. Back, gentlemen, back!"

The young men consulted each other by a glance; and at this moment a pistol shot was heard, followed by two or three cries for help. The youths made themselves sure, by another glance, that they were both of the same mind, not to retreat; and, as the tutor had already turned his horse, they both spurred forward, Raoul crying out, "Follow me, Olivain!" and the count, "Follow me, Urbain and Blanchet!"

And, before the tutor had recovered from his surprise, they had already disappeared in the forest.

At the moment that the young men pushed forward, each had taken a pistol in his hand. In less than five minutes they reached the place whence the noise appeared to have come: there they checked their horses, and went forward with precaution.

"Hush!" said de Guiche, "there are some horsemen."

"Yes; three on their horses, and three who have dismounted."

"What are they doing? Can you see?"

"Yes; it appears to me, as if they were plundering some one, mortally wounded."

"It is some cowardly assassination," said Guiche.

"And yet they are soldiers," replied Bragelonne.

"Yes, but partisans—that is to say, highway robbers."

"Charge!" said Raoul.

"Charge!" responded de Guiche.

"Gentlemen," cried the poor tutor, "gentlemen, in the name of Heaven—"

But the young men did not hear him: they were gone off in mutual emulation; and the cries of the tutor had no other result than to rouse the attention of the Spaniards.

The three partisans, who were on horseback, immediately rushed forward to meet the two young men, whilst the three others finished plundering the two travellers; for, on coming near, the young men perceived two bodies, instead of one, stretched on the ground.

"At the distance of ten paces, de Guiche fired first, and missed his man. The Spaniard who opposed Raoul fired in his turn, and Raoul felt a pain, like a blow from a whip, on his left arm. At four paces he fired his shot, and the Spaniard, struck in the middle of the chest, stretched out his arms, fell back on the crupper of his horse, which turned round, and bore him away. At this moment, Raoul saw, as through a cloud, the barrel of a musket directed towards him. Athos's advice came into his mind: by a motion as quick as lightning, he made his horse rear. The shot was fired: the horse made a bound on one side, lost all his feet at the same time, and fell, entangling Raoul's leg under him.

The Spaniard rushed forward, clubbing his musket, to break Raoul's head with the butt-end.

Unfortunately, in Raoul's position, he could neither draw his sword from the scabbard, nor a pistol from his holsters: he saw the butt of the musket impending over his head; and, in spite of himself, he was just closing his eyes, when, with one bound, de Guiche was upon the Spaniard, and put his pistol to his head.

"Yield yourself," cried he, "or you are a dead man!"

The musket fell from the hand of the soldier, who immediately surrendered.

Guiche called one of the lacqueys, delivered the prisoner into his

custody, with orders to blow out his brains if he attempted to escape, leaped from his horse, and went up to Raoul.

"Faith, sir," said Raoul, laughing, although his paleness betrayed the natural emotion of a first affair, "you quickly pay your debts, and did not wish to remain longer under obligation. But for you," said he, repeating the count's words, "I had been dead—three times dead."

"My opponent, by taking flight," said de Guiche, "made it quite easy for me to come to your assistance. But are you seriously wounded? I see that you are all over blood."

"I believe," said Raoul, "that I have something like a scratch on my arm. Help me, therefore, to draw myself from beneath my horse, and nothing, I hope, will prevent our continuing our journey."

M. d'Arminges and Olivain had already dismounted, and were raising the horse, which was struggling in its last agonies. Raoul managed to draw his foot from the stirrup, and his leg from beneath the horse, and in a moment he was on his legs.

"Nothing broken?" said de Guiche.

"Faith, no, thank heaven!" answered Raoul. "But what is become of the unfortunate men whom these wretches have assassinated?"

"We have arrived too late: they have killed them, I believe, and escaped with their booty. My two lacqueys are standing by the bodies."

"Let us go and see whether they are quite dead, and if some assistance might not be rendered them," said Raoul. "Olivain, we have obtained two horses, but I have lost mine: therefore take the best of the two for yourself, and give me yours."

And they went to the place where the two victims lay extended on the ground.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE MONK

Two men were stretched on the ground, one motionless, with his face on the earth, pierced by three balls, and swimming in blood: this one was dead.

The other had been placed with his back against a tree by the two lacqueys, and, with his eyes raised towards heaven, and clasped hands, he was praying earnestly. He had received a ball, which had broken the top of his thigh.

The young men went first up to the dead man, and looked at him with astonishment.

"He is a priest," said Bragelonne; "he wears the tonsure: oh, the cursed wretches, who could lay hands on the ministers of God!"

"Come here, sir," said Urbain, an old soldier, who had made all his campaigns with the cardinal duke.—"Come here: nothing can be done with the other; whilst this man may perhaps be saved."

The wounded man smiled sadly.

"Save me! No," said he; "but you can assist me to die."

"Are you a priest?" demanded Raoul.

"No, sir."

"Because your unfortunate companion appeared to me to belong to the church," said Raoul.

"He is the curé of Bethune, sir. He was carrying the sacred vessels of his church, and the treasure of his chapter, to a place of safety; for the prince abandoned our town yesterday, and perhaps the Spaniard may be there to-morrow. Now, as it was known that parties of the enemy were scouring the country, and the expedition was dangerous, no one dared to accompany him: I therefore offered myself."

"And these wretches attacked you—these abominable wretches fired upon a priest."

"Gentlemen," said the wounded man, looking round him, "I am in great pain, and I could wish to be carried into some house."

"Where you may receive aid," said de Guiche.

"No—where I may confess."

"But, perhaps," said Raoul, "you are not so dangerously wounded as you imagine."

"Sir," said the wounded man, "believe me there is no time to lose: the ball has broken the neck of the thigh, and penetrated the intestines."

"Are you a medical man?" demanded de Guiche.

"No," said the dying man, "but I know something of wounds, and mine is mortal. Endeavour, therefore, to carry me somewhere where I can find a priest, or take the trouble to bring one here, and God will reward the righteous act. It is my soul that must be saved: as for my body, it is lost."

"It is impossible that you should die in performing such a good action," said Raoul.

"Gentlemen, in the name of heaven," said the wounded man, rallying all his strength to rise, "let us not lose time in useless words. Either assist me in gaining the neighbouring village, or swear to me, by your hopes of salvation, that you will send me the first priest you meet. But," he added, in accents of despair, "perhaps no one will dare to come; for it is known that the Spaniards are scouring the country, and I shall die without absolution! My God! my God!" added the wounded man in an accent of terror which made the young men shudder—"you will not allow that, will you? It would be too terrible!"

"Calm yourself, sir," said de Guiche; "I swear that you shall have the consolation you demand. Only tell us where there is a house where we can ask for assistance, and a village where we may seek for a priest."

"Thank you, and may God reward you! There is an inn about half a league from this spot, on this same road; and, about a league beyond the inn you will find the village of Greney. Go to the curé, or should he not be at home, go to the convent of the Augustins, which is the last house in the village, on the right-hand side, and bring me one of the brothers. What does it signify, monk

or curé, provided he has received from holy church the power of absolution *in articulo mortis.*"

"M. d'Arminges," said de Guiche, "remain with this unhappy man, and take care that he is carried as gently as possible. Make a litter with the branches of trees, and put all your cloaks upon it; two of our lacqueys will carry it, whilst the third will be ready to relieve the one who may be tired. The viscount and I will go in search of a priest."

"Go, sir," said the tutor, "but in the name of heaven, do not expose yourself."

"Make yourself easy. Besides, we are safe for to-day: you know the axiom—*Non bis in idem.*"

"Courage, sir," said Raoul to the wounded man: "we go to perform your wishes."

"God bless you, gentlemen," replied the dying man, in a tone of gratitude impossible to describe.

And the two youths went off at a gallop, in the direction pointed out, whilst the tutor superintended the formation of a litter.

After having proceeded about ten minutes, the young men perceived the inn. Raoul, without dismounting, called the host, and informed him that a wounded man would shortly be brought to his house, and requested him to prepare everything necessary for dressing his wound, such as a bed, bandages, and lint; and ordering him besides, if he knew of any physician or surgical operator, to send for him, and engaging himself to pay the messenger.

The host, seeing two young gentlemen richly dressed, promised all they demanded; and our two cavaliers, after having seen the preparations for his reception commenced, again departed, and pushed forward towards Greney.

They had proceeded about a league, and already distinguished the first houses of the town, whose roofs, covered with red tiles, cut sharply on the green trees which surrounded them, when they saw coming towards them, mounted on a mule, a poor monk, whom, from his large hat, and his gray woollen frock, they took for a brother of St. Augustin. This time chance appeared to send them what they sought.

They drew near to the monk. He was a man of about twenty-two or twenty-three years of age, but whom ascetic habits had apparently aged. He was pale—not that clear paleness which is in general so comely, but of a bilious yellow; his short hair, which scarcely descended below his hat, was very light; and his clear blue eyes appeared to have no speculation in them.

"Sir," said Raoul, with his usual politeness, "are you an ecclesiastic?"

"Why do you ask me?" said the stranger, with an indifference almost uncivil.

"That we may know it," replied de Guiche, haughtily.

The stranger touched his mule with his heel, and continued his journey.

De Guiche placed himself before him, and barred his passage. "Answer, sir,' said he: "you have been questioned politely, and every question deserves an answer."

"I am at liberty, I suppose, to say, or not to say, who I am, to the two first persons who may take a fancy to interrogate me."

De Guiche with difficulty restrained the violent desire he had to break the monk's bones.

"First," said he, making a great effort to master himself, "we are not the two first persons you have met. My friend is the Viscount de Bragelonne, and I am the Count de Guiche. Besides, it is not from any causeless caprice that we ask you the question; for there is a man yonder, wounded and dying, who demands the aid of the church. If you are a priest, I charge you, in the name of humanity, to assist this man; if you are not, it is another thing; and I tell you, in the name of that courtesy of which you appear to be so completely ignorant, that I shall chastise you for your insolence."

The paleness of the monk became actual lividness; and he smiled in such a strange manner, that Raoul, who did not take his eyes off him, felt that smile wring his heart like an insult.

"He is some Spanish or Flemish spy," said he, putting his hand to the butt of one of his pistols.

A menacing glance was Raoul's response.

"Well, sir, will you answer?" demanded de Guiche.

"I am a priest, gentlemen," said the young man. And his countenance resumed its usual indifference.

"Then, father," said Raoul, letting his pistol again fall into the holster, and assuming a tone of respect which his heart did not feel —"then, if you are a priest, you will, as my friend has said, speedily have an opportunity of exercising your vocation. An unfortunate man, who is wounded, will soon arrive at a neighbouring inn: he asks for the assistance of one of God's ministers. Our people are now waiting upon him."

"I will go there," said the monk; and he pressed his heel against his mule.

"If you do not go there, sir," said de Guiche, "depend upon it that we have horses which will overtake your mule, with sufficient power to have you arrested, wherever you may be; and then, I swear, your trial will soon be finished. A tree and a cord are to be found everywhere!"

The monk's eye fired again, but that was all. He repeated his phrase—"I am going there," and departed.

"Let us follow him," said de Guiche: "it will be the safest way."

"I was going to propose it," said Bragelonne.

And the two young men proceeded, regulating their pace by that of the monk, whom they followed at about the distance of a pistol shot.

After about five minutes, the monk turned round to see whether he were followed or not.

"Do you see?" said Raoul; "we have done well."

"What a horrible countenance that monk has," said de Guiche.

"Horrible!" replied Raoul; "and more especially as to the expression: his yellow hair, his dull eyes, his lips which disappear every time he speaks."

"Yes, yes," said de Guiche, who had been less struck by all these particulars, seeing that Raoul was examining him whilst de Guiche was talking—"yes, a strange countenance: but these monks submit to such degrading exercises. Their fasts make them pale, the blows of their discipline make them hypocrites, and it is

through lamenting the goods of life which they have lost, and which we enjoy, that their eyes grow dull."

"At last," said Raoul, "this poor man will have his priest; but, by Jove! the penitent appears to have a better conscience than his confessor. As for me, I own that I am accustomed to see priests with quite a different aspect."

"Ah!" said de Guiche, "you do not comprehend. This is one of those wandering brothers, who go begging about on the great roads, till the time when heaven may give them a benefice. They are generally foreigners—Scotch, Irish, or Danes. I have often had such men pointed out to me."

"As ugly?"

"No; but reasonably hideous, nevertheless."

"What a misfortune for this poor wounded man to die under the hands of such a hedge priest."

"Bah," said de Guiche, "absolution does not come from him who gives it, but from God. And yet, I tell you what: I would prefer dying impenitent, to having anything to do with such a confessor. And you are of the same opinion, are you not, viscount? I saw you lovingly engaged with the butt-end of your pistol, as if you were tempted to blow his brains out."

"Yes, count, it is a strange thing, and will surprise you: I experienced an indescribable horror on seeing that man. Did you ever behold a serpent rise up in your path?"

"Never," said de Guiche.

"Well, it happened to me once, in the woods of the Blaisois. I remember that, at the first sight of the reptile, which looked at me with its leaden eyes, recoiling back upon itself, shaking its head, and vibrating its tongue, I remained pale, immoveable, and as it were fascinated, until the Count de la Fère—"

"Your father?" demanded de Guiche.

"No, my guardian," replied Raoul, colouring.

"Very well."

"Till the moment when the Count de la Fère said, 'Come, draw, Bragelonne:' then only did I run up to the reptile, and, at the moment that it was balancing itself on its tail and hissing to attack

me, I cut it in two. Well, I protest to you that I felt exactly the same sensation at the sight of this man, when he said, 'Why do you ask me that?' and when he looked at me."

"Therefore you blame yourself for not having cut him in two, like the serpent?"

"Faith, and I do!" said Raoul.

At this moment they came in sight of the inn, and saw, on the other side of it, the little procession of the wounded man, led by M. d'Arminges. Two men were carrying the dying man; the third led the horses.

The young men spurred on.

"There is the wounded man, said de Guiche, on passing the friar of St. Augustin; "have the goodness to make a little haste, sir monk."

As for Raoul, he went as far as he could from the friar, and turned his head from him in disgust.

Thus the young men preceded, instead of following, the confessor. They went to meet the wounded man, and announced the good news. He raised himself, to look in the direction indicated; saw the monk, who was coming forward, having hastened the pace of his mule; and fell back on the litter, his countenance illumined with joy.

"Now," said the young men, "we have done all we can for you; and as we are in haste to join the prince's army, we must continue our journey: you will excuse us, will you not, sir. It is reported that a battle will soon take place, and we should not wish to arrive too late for it."

"Go, young gentlemen," said the wounded man, "and may you be blessed for your compassion to me. You have indeed, as you say, done all you could for me, and I can only again say, may God preserve you, and those who are dear to you."

"Sir," said de Guiche to his tutor, "we will go forward; you will join us again on the road to Cambrin."

The host was at his door, and had prepared everything—bed, bandages, and lint; and an hostler had been sent for a surgeon at Lens, which was the nearest town.

"Sir," said the innkeeper, "every thing shall be done as you wish. But will you not stop, sir, to dress your own wound?" he continued, addressing Bragelonne.

"Oh! my wound is nothing," said the viscount; "it will be time enough for me to think of that at the next halt. Only have the goodness, if you should see a horseman pass, and, if he should inquire respecting a young man, mounted on a chestnut horse, and followed by a lacquey, to tell him that you have seen me, but that I have continued my journey, proposing to dine at Mazingarbe, and to sleep at Cambrin. That horseman is my servant."

"Would it not be a better and more certain way, if I were to ask him his name, and to tell him yours?" said the host.

"There is no harm in an excess of precaution," answered Raoul. "I am the Viscount de Bragelonne, and he Grimaud."

At this moment the wounded man arrived from one side, and the monk from the other. The two young men drew away, to let the litter pass. On his part, the monk got off his mule, and ordered it to be led into the stable, but not unsaddled.

"Sir monk," said de Guiche, "confess this man properly, and do not distress yourself about your own expenses, and those of your mule: everything is paid.

"Thank you, sir," said the monk, with one of those smiles which had made Bragelonne shudder.

"Come along, count," said Raoul, who appeared unable to support the monk's presence—"come along, I feel quite ill here."

"Thank you, once more, my handsome young gentlemen," said the wounded man: "do not forget me in your prayers."

"Be assured of that," said de Guiche, pricking forward to rejoin Bragelonne, who had got some way before him.

At this moment the litter, borne by the two lacqueys, entered the house. The host and his wife, who had hastened forward, were standing on the steps of the staircase. The unhappy man who was wounded appeared to suffer extreme pain, and yet he thought of nothing but whether the monk were following him.

At sight of this man, pale and covered with blood, the wife seized hold of her husband's arm.

"Well! what is the matter?" said he: "are you ill?"

"No, but look," said the hostess pointing to the wounded man.

"Forsooth," replied the host, "he seems to me to be mighty bad."

"That is not what I mean," continued the woman trembling; "I ask you whether you do not know him?"

"That man? Wait now."

"Ah! I see that you recognise him," said the woman, "for you also grow pale."

"Really now," cried the host: "bad luck to our house! It is the ancient executioner of Bethune!"

"The ancient executioner of Bethune!" murmured the young monk, starting back, and betraying by his countenance the repugnance which his penitent inspired.

M. d'Arminges, who was standing by the door, perceived his hesitation. "Sir monk," said he, "although he is, or has been an executioner, this unhappy creature is yet a man: render him, therefore, the last service which he requires of you, and your work will be but the more meritorious."

The monk made no answer, but silently went towards the room where the lacqueys had already laid the dying man on a bed.

On seeing the man of God approaching the pillow of the wounded man, the two lacqueys left the room, and shut the door on the monk and his penitent. D'Arminges and Olivain were waiting for them; they remounted their horses, and all four set off at a trot, following the road, at the extremity of which Raoul and his companion had already disappeared.

Just after the departure of the tutor and his escort, another traveller stopped at the door of the inn.

"What do you wish for, sir?" said the host, still pale and trembling from the discovery he had just made.

The traveller made the sign of a man drinking, and, getting off his horse, pointed to him, and made the motion of a man rubbing him.

"Ah! the deuce!" said the host, "it seems that this one is dumb. And where do you wish to drink?" he inquired.

"Here!" said the traveller, pointing to a table.

"I was mistaken," said mine host; "he is not quite dumb." And he went for a bottle of wine and some biscuits, which he placed before his taciturn guest.

"Do you wish for anything else, sir?" said the host.

"Yes," said the traveller.

"And what is it, pray, sir?"

"To know whether you have seen a young gentleman pass by on a chestnut horse, followed by a lacquey."

"The Viscount de Bragelonne?" said the host.

"Exactly so."

"Then you are called Grimaud."

The traveller gave an assenting nod.

"Well, then," replied mine host, "your young master was here a quarter of an hour ago: he will dine at Mazingarbe, and sleep at Cambrin."

"How far is it from this to Mazingarbe?"

"Two leagues and a half."

"Thanks."

Grimaud, sure of meeting his young master at the end of the day, appeared more easy, wiped his forehead, and poured out a glass of wine, which he drank in silence. He had just placed the glass on the table, and was going to fill it again, when a terrible cry issued from the chamber in which were the monk and the dying man.

Grimaud started up. "What is that?" said he, "and whence comes that cry?"

"From the wounded man's chamber," replied the host.

"What wounded man?" demanded Grimaud.

"The ancient executioner of Bethune, who has just been murdered by the Spaniards: they have brought him here, and he is now confessing to an Augustin friar; he seems to be in great pain."

"The ancient executioner of Bethune!" murmured Grimaud, recalling his recollections: "a man from fifty-five to sixty years of age, tall, powerful, dark, and with hair and beard quite black?"

"That's it, except that his beard has grown gray, and his hair white. Do you know him?" demanded the host.

"I saw him once," answered Grimaud, whose countenance became clouded, at the picture which this recollection presented to his imagination.

The woman ran up to them in great agitation. "Did you hear?" she said to her husband.

"Yes," replied the host, looking anxiously towards the door.

At this moment a cry, less powerful than the first, but followed by a long and continuous groan, was heard. The three people looked at each other with a shudder.

"We must see what is the matter," said Grimaud.

"It sounds like one who is having his throat cut," said the host.

"Jesus!" said his wife, crossing herself.

If Grimaud spoke but little, it is well known that he was a man of action. He rushed towards the door, and shook it violently; but it was bolted inside.

"Open!" cried the host: "open, sir monk—open this instant!"

No one answered.

"Open, or I will break down the door!" said Grimaud.

The same silence continued. Grimaud cast his eyes around, and discovered a crowbar, which was by chance in a corner; he seized it, and before the host could prevent him, he had broken in the door.

The room was inundated with blood, which was trickling through the mattrass. The wounded man was speechless, and there was a rattling in his throat. The monk was gone.

"The monk!" cried the host—"where is the monk?"

Grimaud rushed towards an open window, which looked upon the courtyard.

"He must have fled this way," said he.

"Do you think so?" said the frightened host. "Waiter, see whether the monk's mule is in the stable."

"The mule is gone!" said he to whom the question was addressed.

Grimaud frowned; the host clasped his hands, and looked around him with distrust; as for his wife, she dared not enter the room, but remained utterly terrified at the door.

Grimaud went up to the wounded man, examining his harsh and

strongly-marked features, which recalled such a terrible recollection to his mind. At last, after a moment's gloomy and mute contemplation—

"There is no longer a doubt," said he: "it is really him."

"Does he yet live?" demanded the host.

Grimaud, without answering, opened his doublet to feel his heart, whilst the host drew near also; but they both suddenly recoiled, the host uttering a cry of terror, and Grimaud turning pale.

The blade of a dagger was buried, even to the hilt, in the left side of the executioner's breast.

"Run for some assistance," said Grimaud; "I will remain with him."

The host left the room, frightened out of his wits. As for his wife, she had run away when she heard her husband's exclamation.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE ABSOLUTION.

We have seen that it was not voluntarily, but much against his inclination, that the monk attended the wounded man, who had been recommended to him in such a singular manner. Perhaps he would have endeavoured to escape, had it been possible; but the threats of the two young gentlemen, as well as those of their attendants, who had remained after them, and who had doubtless received their instructions; and, lastly, to tell the whole truth, reflection itself, had compelled the monk to retain the character of a confessor, without betraying too much ill-humour; and, having once entered the room, he approached the wounded man's pillow.

With the rapid glance peculiar to those who are dying, and who consequently have not a moment to lose, the executioner surveyed

him in whom he hoped to find a comforter. Making a movement of surprise, he said, "You are very young, my father."

"People who wear my robe have no age," drily responded the monk.

"Alas! speak more gently to me, father," said the wounded man: "I much want a friend in my last moments."

"Are you in great pain?" demanded the monk.

"Yes; but of the soul, much more than of the body."

"We will save your soul," replied the young man: "but are you really the executioner of Bethune, as these people said?"

"That is to say," replied the wounded man with great quickness, doubtless fearing least the name of executioner should deprive him of the last benefits of religion which he required—"that is to say, I was the executioner, but am so no longer. I have given up the office these fifteen years. I yet officially attend the executions, but no longer act myself. Oh, no!"

"You therefore feel great repugnance to your office, do you not?"

The executioner heaved a deep sigh. "Whilst I only struck in the name of law and justice," said he, "my employment, sanctioned as it was by their authority, allowed me to sleep in tranquillity; but since that terrible night, when I became the instrument of private vengeance, and raised the sword against one of God's creatures with a feeling of hatred—since that day——

The executioner stopped, shaking his head with an air of mute despair.

"Speak," said the monk, who was sitting at the foot of the bed, and who began to feel an interest in a recital which had such a singular commencement.

"Ah!" exclaimed the dying man, with all the force of a secret sorrow, long repressed, and which at last unburdens itself—"ah! how I have endeavoured to stifle my remorse by the good works of twenty years. I have struggled to conquer that ferocity natural to those who shed blood: on every opportunity I have exposed my own life to save that of those who who were in danger; and I have preserved many lives, in exchange for those that I have taken away.

And that is not all: the property acquired by my profession, I have distributed amongst the poor; I have been most constant in my religious exercises; and the people who avoided me, have become accustomed to my sight. All have forgiven, some have even loved me; but I believe that God has not pardoned me; for the recollection of this execution never leaves me for one single instant, and the spectre of that woman appears to rise up before me every night."

"A woman! Then it was a woman whom you assassinated?" exclaimed the monk.

"And you also!" cried the executioner—"you make use of that word which is incessantly ringing in my ear—assassinated. I have, therefore, assassinated, and not executed her! I am, then, an assassin, and not a legalized executioner!" And he closed his eyes, uttering a deep groan.

The monk no doubt feared that he would die without telling him any more; for he replied, with considerable vivacity, "Proceed: as yet I know nothing; and, when you have finished, God and I will judge you."

"Oh, my father!" continued the executioner, without opening his eyes, as if he feared, on opening them, to behold some dreadful object—"it is more particularly in the dark, and when by chance I am crossing some river, that this unconquerable terror redoubles. It then seems to me that my hand grows heavy, as if yet weighed down by my sword; that the water becomes of the colour of blood; and that all the sounds of nature, the rustling of the leaves, the murmur of the wind, the rippling of the stream, combine to form a voice, mournful, despairing, and terrible, which cries out to me—'Let the justice of God have its course!'"

"Utter delirium!" murmured the monk, shaking his head.

The executioner opened his eyes, made a motion to turn himself towards the young man, and seized hold of his arm.

"Delirium!" he repeated: "delirium, do you say? Oh no! for it was in the evening, for I did cast her body into the river, for the words which my remorse repeats—those very words, I in

my pride pronounced. After having been the instrument of human justice, I believed that I was become the instrument of the justice of God."

"But let me hear how all this happened? Speak;" said the monk.

"One evening a man came to me, and showed me an order. I followed him. Four more gentlemen awaited me. They took me with them, masked. I secretly determined to refuse, should the purpose for which they required me appear to me to be unjust. We proceeded for about five or six leagues, gloomy and silent, almost without exchanging one word. At last, through the window of a small cottage, they showed me a woman, leaning on a table, and said, there is the woman whom you must execute."

"Horror!" said the monk: "and you obeyed them?"

"My father, this woman was a monster. She had poisoned, it was said, her second husband, and had attempted to assassinate her brother in-law, who was amongst these men; she had just poisoned a young woman, who was her rival; and it was said, that before she left England, she had caused the king's favourite to be stabbed."

"What, Buckingham?" exclaimed the monk.

"Yes, Buckingham."

"This woman was therefore an Englishwoman?

"No, she was a Frenchwoman, but she had married in England."

The monk turned pale, wiped his forehead, arose and bolted the door. The executioner thought that he was going to abandon him, and fell back, groaning, on the bed.

"No, no—here I am," said the monk, returning quickly to him; "continue. Who were those men?"

"One was an Englishman, I believe; the other four were French, and wore the dress of musketeers."

"Their names?" demanded the monk.

"I did not know them. But the four gentlemen called the Englishman, my lord."

"And was this woman beautiful?"

"Young and beautiful! Oh, yes, very beautiful. I can see her now, when, on her knees at my feet, she prayed, with her head

turned backwards. I have never been able to understand how I could sever a head so beautiful and so pale."

The monk appeared to be agitated by a strange emotion. Every limb trembled; and it was evident that he wished, but dared not to put a question. At last, after a violent effort to restrain himself—"The name of this woman?" said he.

"I do not know it. As I have told you, she had married twice, it appears; once in France, and once in England."

"And you say that she was young?"

"Twenty-five years old."

"Beautiful?"

"Ravishingly so."

"Fair?"

"Yes."

"With long hair, reaching to her shoulders—was it not so?"

"Yes."

"With eyes of admirable expression?"

"When she chose. Oh, yes, it was so."

"And a voice of singular sweetness?"

"How do *you* know?" And the executioner leant his elbow on the bed, and fixed his terrified look on the monk, who was become actually livid.

"And you killed her!" said the monk; "you allowed yourself to become the instrument of these cowards, who dared not kill her themselves! You had no pity for that youth, that beauty, that weakness! You actually killed that woman!"

"Alas!" replied the executioner, "I have told you, my father, that that woman, under such a heavenly exterior, concealed the soul of a demon; and when I saw her, when I recalled all the evil that she had committed against me—"

"Against you? And what could she have done to you? Let me hear."

"She had seduced and destroyed my brother, who was a priest—she had fled with him from her convent."

"With your brother?"

"Yes, my brother was her first lover. She had been the cause

of my brother's death. Oh, father, father! do not look at me in that manner. Oh, I am then very guilty! Oh, you will not then pardon me!"

The monk composed his countenance. "Yes, yes," said he, "I will pardon you, if you tell me all."

"Oh!" exclaimed the executioner, "all! all!"

"Then answer me. If she seduced your brother—you said that she seduced him, did you not?"

"Yes."

'If she caused his death—you said that she caused his death, did you not?'

"Yes," repeated the executioner.

"Then you must know the name of this young girl."

"Oh, my God, my God!" cried the executioner, "I feel as if I were dying. Absolution, my father! The absolution!"

"Tell me her name!" exclaimed the monk, "and I will give it to you."

"She was named—my God, have pity on me!" murmured the executioner, as he fell back on the bed, pale, shuddering, and like a man at the point of death.

"Her name!" repeated the monk, crouching down as if he wished to tear the name from him who did not wish to tell it—"her name! Speak, or no absolution!"

The dying man appeared to collect all his strength.

The monk's eyes sparkled.

"Anne de Breuil," murmured the wounded man.

"Anne de Breuil!" cried the monk, stretching himself to his full height, and raising his hands to heaven—"Anne de Breuil! And you really said Anne de Breuil, did you not?"

"Yes, yes, that was the name. And now give me absolution, for I am dying."

"I absolve you?" said the priest, with a laugh which made the dying man's hair stand erect upon his head—"I absolve you! I am no priest!"

"You are not a priest! exclaimed the executioner: "and who are you, then?"

"I will soon tell you who I am, wretch that you are!"

"Ah, my God!"

"I am John Francis de Winter!"

"I do not know you!" exclaimed the executioner.

"Wait, wait—you shall soon know me! I am John Francis de Winter," he repeated, "and that woman——"

"Well, and that woman?"

"Was my mother."

The executioner then uttered the first cry—that terrible cry, which had been first heard.

"Oh! pardon me, pardon me!" murmured he—"if not in the name of God, at least in your own name—if not as a priest, at any rate as a son."

"Pardon you!" exclaimed the false priest—"pardon you! God may do so perhaps; but I—never! never!"

"For pity's sake!" said the executioner, stretching forth his arms towards him.

"No pity for him who had no pity. Die impenitent—die in despair—die, and be eternally damned!"

And drawing a dagger from beneath his frock, and burying it in his breast—"There," said he, "there is my absolution!"

Then was heard that second cry, more feeble than the first, and which had been followed by a prolonged groan.

The executioner, who had raised himself up, was thrown back upon the bed. As for the monk, without withdrawing the dagger from the wound, he ran to the window, opened it, jumped down upon a flower-bed, glided into the stable, took his mule, which he led out by a back door, hastened to the first clump of trees, where he threw off his monk's frock, drew from his valise a complete horseman's dress, clothed himself in it, gained the first posting-house on foot, procured a horse, and in that manner rode post to Paris.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

GRIMAUD SPEAKS.

Grimaud had remained alone with the executioner. The host was gone for assistance, and his wife was praying.

After the interval of a moment or two, the wounded man opened his eyes. "Help!" murmured he, "help! oh, my God, can I find no one to help me to live or die?"

And by a great effort he raised his hand to his breast: it encountered the handle of the dagger. "Ah!" said he, like a man who remembers something. And he let his arm fall again.

"Take courage," said Grimaud; "some one is gone for assistance."

"Who are you?" demanded the wounded man, fixing his eyes on Grimaud with an unnatural stare.

"An old acquaintance," said Grimaud.

"You?"

The wounded man endeavoured to recal the features of him who addressed him. "Under what circumstances did we meet?" demanded he.

"One night, twenty years ago, my master sought you at Bethune, and led you to Armentières."

"I know you well enough, now," said the executioner: "you are one of the lacqueys."

"Just so."

"Whence do you come?"

"I was passing by, and stopped at this inn to bait my horse. They were telling me that the executioner of Bethune was wounded, when you cried out twice. At the first cry we hastened here, and at the second we broke open the door."

"And the monk," said the executioner—"have you seen the monk?"

"What monk?"

"The monk who was shut up with me."

"No, he was no longer here; it seems that he escaped by the window. And is it he who stabbed you?"

"Yes," said the executioner.

Grimaud made a motion as if to leave the room.

"What are you going to do?" inquired the wounded man.

"To run after him."

"By no means."

"And why not?"

"He avenged himself, and he did well. Now I hope that God will pardon me, for an expiation has been made."

"Explain yourself," said Grimaud.

"That woman, who you and your masters made me kill——"

"My Lady?"

"Yes, My Lady; it is true—that is what you called her——'

"What can the monk have to do with her?"

"She was his mother."

Grimaud staggered back, and looked at the dying man with an eye so dull, that it almost appeared as if deprived of all consciousness. "His mother!" he repeated.

"Yes, his mother."

"Then he knows the secret?"

"I took him for a monk, and I revealed it to him in confession."

"Unhappy man!" exclaimed Grimaud, whose forehead was bedewed with perspiration at the sole idea of the consequences of such a revelation: "unhappy man! you did not name any one, I hope?"

"I did not name any one, because I did not know any one, except the maiden name of his mother; and it was by that name that he recognised her. But he knows that his uncle was present, as one of her judges."

And he fell back exhausted. Grimaud wished to assist him, and put his hand towards the handle of the dagger.

"Do not touch me," said the executioner: "if the dagger be drawn out, I shall die."

Grimaud withheld his hand; and then, suddenly striking his forehead—"Ah! but if this man should find out who the others are, my master is lost!"

"Do not lose a moment," exclaimed the executioner: "warn him, if he yet lives—warn his friends: my death, believe me, will not be the termination of this terrible adventure."

"Where was he going?" said Grimaud.

"Towards Paris."

"Who stopped him here?"

"Two young gentlemen, who were going to the army, and one of whom was called the Viscount de Bragelonne; for I heard his name pronounced by his comrade."

"And it was that young man who brought this monk to you?"

"Yes."

"Then it was the will of God," said Grimaud.

"Without doubt," replied the wounded man.

"This is quite horrible!" murmured Grimaud. "And yet that woman deserved her fate. Do you not think so?"

"When one is dying," said the executioner, "the crimes of others look very small in comparison with one's own." And he fell back exhausted, closing his eyes.

Grimaud was retained, between pity, which prevented his leaving this man without aid, and fear, which urged him to depart instantaneously, to carry this intelligence to the Count de la Fère, when he heard a noise in the passage, and saw the host enter with a surgeon, whom they had at last procured.

Many followed, attracted by curiosity, the report of this strange adventure beginning to be spread around.

The surgeon approached the dying man, who appeared to have fainted.

"It is necessary first to draw the weapon from the breast," said he, shaking his head in a most significant manner.

Grimaud remembered the declaration which the wounded man had just made, and turned away his eyes.

The surgeon removed the doublet, tore the shirt, and bared his breast. The weapon, as we have said, had been thrust in, even up to the haft. The surgeon took hold of it by the handle: as he drew it out, the wounded man opened his eyes with a frightful stare. When the blade was entirely withdrawn from the wound, a red foam

encircled the mouth of the executioner; and, at the very moment that he breathed, a stream of blood spouted from the orifice of the wound. The dying man, with a choking rattle, fixed his gaze, with a singular expression, on Grimaud, and instantly expired.

Grimaud picked up the poignard, which lay on the floor dripping with blood, made a sign to the host to follow him, paid his expenses with a generosity worthy of his master, and mounted his horse. He had just determined on returning straight to Paris; but remembering the anxiety which his prolonged absence would occasion his young master, who was only two leagues from the place where he then was—that in a very short time he could reach him—and that to go there, explain everything, and return, would not occupy much more than an hour—he put his horse to a gallop, and in a very short time dismounted at the *Mulet Couronné*, the only inn at Mazingarbe.

At the first words which he exchanged with the host, he found that he had at last come up with him whom he followed.

Raoul was at table, with the Count de Guiche and his tutor; but the melancholy adventure of the morning had cast a sadness over the two young men, which the gaiety of M. d'Arminges, more philosophical because more accustomed to such spectacles than they were, could not dissipate.

Suddenly the door opened, and Grimaud entered, pale, and covered with dust, and with the blood of the unhappy wounded man.

"Grimaud, my excellent Grimaud!" cried out Raoul; "here you are at last! Excuse me, gentlemen; he is not a servant, but a friend."

And rising and running up to him—"How is the count?" he continued: "does he regret me a little? Have you seen him since we separated? Answer! But I also have much to tell you: many adventures have happened to us in the last three days. But what is the matter with you? How pale you are!—and blood!—what does this blood mean?"

"There really is blood,' said the count, rising. "are you wounded, my friend?"

"No, sir," said Grimaud, "this blood does not belong to me."

"To whom, then?" said Raoul.

"It is the blood of the unhappy man you left at the inn, and who died in my arms."

"In your arms! Do you, then, know who this man was?"

"Yes," said Grimaud.

"He was the ancient executioner of Bethune."

"I know that."

"And he is dead?"

"Yes," answered Grimaud.

The two young men looked at each other.

"What would you have, gentlemen?" said d'Arminges; "it is the common law of nature, and being an executioner does not exempt him from it. From the moment that I saw his wound, I had a bad opinion of it; and you know that it was also his own opinion, since he asked for a monk."

At the word monk, Grimaud turned pale.

"Come, come, to table," said d'Arminges, who, like all men of that time, and more especially of his age, did not permit sensibility between two courses.

"Yes, sir, you are right," said Raoul. "Come, Grimaud, get something for yourself. Order, command; and after you have refreshed yourself, we will have some conversation."

"No, sir," answered Grimaud, "I cannot stop one minute—I must set off for Paris instantaneously."

"What! *you* set off for Paris! You are mistaken: it is Olivain who must go to Paris: you must remain."

"On the contrary, Olivain must remain, and I must depart. I am come expressly to tell you so."

"But why is this change?"

"I cannot tell you."

"Explain yourself."

"I cannot explain myself."

"Come, what do you mean by this jesting?"

"The viscount knows that I never jest."

"Yes; but I also know that the Count de la Fère said that you were to remain with me, and that Olivain was to return to Paris. I shall follow the count's orders."

"Not under the present circumstances, sir."

"And you will disobey me, then, perhaps?"

"Yes, sir; for it is absolutely necessary."

"Then you actually persist?"

"Yes, I am going. Farewell, viscount."

And Grimaud bowed and turned to leave the room. Raoul, furious, and at the same time under great anxiety, ran after him, and seized him by the arm.

"Grimaud," exclaimed Raoul, "remain, I command you!"

"Then," said Grimaud, "you wish me to leave the count to certain death?"

Grimaud bowed, and was leaving the room.

"Grimaud, my friend," said the viscount, "you will not go in this manner—you will not leave me in such anxiety. Grimaud, speak, speak, in the name of heaven!" And Raoul, staggering back, fell upon a chair.

"I can only tell you one thing, sir—for the secret which you ask for is not mine—you met a monk, did you not?"

"Yes."

The two young men looked at each other with affright.

"You conducted him to the wounded man?"

"Yes."

"You had therefore time to observe him?"

"Yes."

"And perhaps you would know him again if you met him?"

"Oh, yes, I can swear to that."

"And I also," said de Guiche.

"Well, then, should you ever meet him again," said Grimaud, "wherever it may be—on the high road, in the street, in a church, wherever you may be—put your foot on him, and crush him, without mercy, without commiseration, as you would a viper, a serpent, or an asp—crush him, and do not leave him until he is dead! The lives of five men will be in jeopardy whilst he lives!"

And without adding one word more Grimaud took advantage of the astonishment and terror into which he had thrown those who heard him, to rush out of the room.

"Well, count," said Raoul, turning towards de Guiche, "did I not tell you that this monk had the same effect upon me as a serpent?"

Two minutes afterwards a horse was heard galloping. Raoul ran to the window: it was Grimaud, who was returning towards Paris. He bowed to the viscount, and soon disappeared round an angle of the road.

Whilst on his journey Grimaud reflected on two things: the first, that, at the rate he was going, this horse would not take him ten leagues; the second, that he had no money. But Grimaud's imagination was the more fertile from his speaking so little. At the first relay that he came to, he sold his horse, and, with the money that it produced, he took post.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE EVE OF BATTLE.

Raoul was drawn from these melancholy reflections by the host, who entered the room in great haste, crying out—"The Spaniards! the Spaniards!"

This cry was of sufficient importance to drive every previous thought from the mind. The young men made some inquiries, and found that the enemy was really advancing by Houdain and Bethune.

Whilst M. d'Arminges gave his orders for the horses, which had been waiting, to be prepared for their departure, the two young men ran up to the highest windows in the house, which commanded a view of all the surrounding country, and actually beheld numerous bodies of infantry and cavalry, just making their appearance from the direction of Mersin and of Lens. This time it was not a small straggling troop of partisans, but the whole army. They had therefore no other alternative than to follow the sage advice of M. d'Arminges—that is, to beat a retreat.

The young men ran down again. M. d'Arminges was already on horseback; Olivain was holding their horses; and the count's lacqueys were carefully guarding the Spanish prisoner, who was mounted on a galloway which had just been purchased for that purpose. For additional security, his hands were bound.

The little troop took the road to Cambrin, where they expected to find the prince; but he had left it the evening before, and had retired upon la Bassée, some false intelligence having induced him to believe that the enemy would pass the Lys at Estaire.

In fact, being deceived by this information, the prince had evacuated Bethune, and concentrated all his forces between Veille-Chapelle and la Venthie; and he himself, having been reconnoitering the whole line with Marshal Grammont, had just returned, and placed himself at table, questioning the officers around him as to the information he had ordered each of them to collect. But he could obtain no positive intelligence: all he could learn was, that the enemy's army had disappeared for the last forty-eight hours, and seemed to have vanished.

Now, an army is never so near, and consequently so threatening, as when it has completely disappeared. The prince was therefore, contrary to his usual habit, silent and thoughtful, when an officer on duty entered the room, and informed Marshal Grammont that some one wanted to speak to him,

The Duke de Grammont asked the prince's permission, and left the room. The prince followed him with his eyes, which he kept fixed on the door, no one daring to speak for fear of interrupting his thoughts.

Suddenly a dull sound was heard. The prince rose quickly, stretching forth his hand towards the quarter from whence the sound proceeded. This sound was very familiar to him: it was the noise of a cannon.

Every one had risen with him.

At this moment the door opened.

"Your excellence," said Marshal Grammont, his countenance radiant with pleasure, "would your highness permit my son, the Count de Guiche, and his travelling companion, the Viscount de

Bragelonne, to enter, and give you some information concerning the enemy we are seeking, and whom they have found?"

"What!" said the prince—"will I permit? Not only do I permit, but I greatly desire it. Let them come in."

The marshal brought forward the two young men, who found themselves in the prince's presence.

"Speak, gentlemen," said the prince, bowing to them; "we will afterwards pay each other the usual compliments. What is of the most pressing consequence to all of us at present, is, to know where the enemy is, and what he is doing."

The office of spokesman naturally devolved on the Count de Guiche: he was not only the oldest of two, but he was also introduced to the prince by his father. Besides, he had long known the prince, whom Raoul now saw for the first time. He therefore recounted to the prince everything they had seen at the inn at Mazingarbe.

In the meantime, Raoul was examining this young general, already so famous by his battles of Rocroy, of Fribourg, and of Nordlingen.

Louis de Bourbon, Prince of Condé, who, since the death of Henry de Bourbon, his father was called, for the sake of brevity, and according to the custom of the time, "Monsieur le Prince," was a young man of not more than twenty-six or twenty-seven years of age, with an eagle eye—"*agl'occhi Grifagni*," as Dante says—a hooked nose, and long hair, flowing in curls down his back; of middle height, but well-made; having all the qualities of a great warrior, that is to say, a quick sight, a rapid decision, and undaunted courage—all which did not prevent his being, at the same time, a man of elegance and talent; so much so, that, besides the revolution he made in war, by the improvements which he introduced into it, he had also caused a revolution at Paris amongst the young noblemen, of whom he was the natural leader, in opposition to the fashionable men of the old court, of whom Bassompierre, Bellegarde, and the Duke d'Angoulême had been the models, and who were termed *petits-maitres*.

From the first words of the Count de Guiche, and from the

direction whence the sound of the cannon was heard, the prince thoroughly understood everything. The enemy must have passed the Lys at St. Venant, and marched upon Lens, with the intention, doubtless, of taking possession of that town, and cutting the French army off from France. The cannon which they heard, were the large guns of the town, which responded to the artillery of the Spaniards and Flemish.

But of what strength was this body of men? Was it a corps intended for a diversion? or was it the entire army? This was the prince's last question, which it was impossible for de Guiche to answer.

Now, as this was the most important question of all, it was that also to which the prince required an exact and positive reply. Raoul therefore conquered that natural feeling of timidity, which, in spite of all his efforts, he felt pervading him in the prince's presence, and approaching him, he said—

"Will your excellence allow me to hazard some words on this subject, which may perhaps relieve you from your embarrassment."

The prince turned, appeared to take in his whole figure at one glance, and then smiled, on seeing a boy of scarcely fifteen years of age.

"Oh, yes, certainly; speak, sir," said he, softening his brief sharp manner of speaking, as if he were addressing a woman.

"Your excellence might question the Spanish prisoner," said Raoul, colouring.

"And have you taken a Spanish prisoner?" exclaimed the prince.

"Yes, your excellence."

"Ah, and that's true," said de Guiche: "I had forgotten it."

"That's natural enough," said Raoul, smiling, "as you took him yourself."

The old marshal turned towards the viscount, grateful for the praise thus bestowed on his son; whilst the prince cried out—

"The young man is right: bring up the prisoner."

In the meantime the prince took de Guiche aside, and questioned him as to the manner in which this prisoner had been made; at the same time inquiring who this young man was.

"Sir," said the prince, turning to Raoul, "I hear that you bring a letter from my sister, Madame de Longueville; but I find that you prefer recommending yourself by giving me good advice."

"Your excellence," said Raoul, colouring, "I did not wish to interrupt your highness in such an important conversation as that you were engaged in with the Count de Guiche; but here is the letter."

"Very well," said the prince, "give it me by and by. Here is the prisoner, and we must attend to business of more immediate and pressing importance."

The prisoner was then brought in. He was one of those condottieri, of whom some remained even at that period, selling their blood to any one who would purchase it, and grown old in brigandage and plunder. Since he had been taken, he had not uttered one single word, so that those who had captured him could not themselves tell to what nation he belonged.

The prince looked at him with an air of indescribable suspicion. "Of what country are you?" he demanded.

The prisoner answered in some strange words.

"Ah! it seems that he is a Spaniard. Do you speak Spanish, Grammont?"

"In truth, your excellence, but very little."

"And I not at all," said the Prince, laughing. "Gentlemen," continued he, turning to those around him, "is there any one amongst you who speaks Spanish, and who will serve me as an interpreter?"

"I will, your excellence," answered Raoul.

"Ah! you speak Spanish?"

"Sufficiently well, I believe, to perform your highness's commands on this occasion."

In the meantime the prisoner had remained perfectly indifferent, and as if he had not in the slightest degree understood what was going on.

"His excellence has demanded of what country you are," said the youth, in the purest Castilian.

"*Ich bin ein Deutscher*," replied the prisoner.

"What the devil does he say?" demanded the prince; "and what fresh gibberish is he talking?"

"He says that he is a German, your excellence," replied Raoul; "and yet I doubt it, for his accent is bad, and his pronunciation defective."

"You therefore speak German, also?" demanded the prince.

"Yes, your excellence," answered Raoul.

"Sufficiently to question him in that language?"

"Yes, your excellence."

"Question him then."

Raoul commenced his questions, but the result bore him out in his conjectures. The prisoner did not understand, or pretended not to understand, what Raoul said; and Raoul could not comprehend the answers he gave, half in Flemish, half in Alsatian. Nevertheless, in the midst of all the efforts of the prisoner to elude a regular examination, Raoul had detected the natural accent of the man.

"*Non siete Spagnuolo,*" said he, "*non siete Tedesco, siete Italiano.*"

The prisoner started, and bit his lips.

"Ah! this I understand marvellously well," said the prince, "and, since he is an Italian, I will continue the examination myself. Thank you, viscount," continued the prince, laughing: "from henceforth, I appoint you my interpreter."

But the prisoner was no more disposed to answer in Italian than in the other languages. What he wanted was, to elude all questions whatever. Therefore he knew nothing—neither the number of the enemy, the name of the commander, nor the object of their march.

"Very well!" said the prince, who well understood the cause of this ignorance; "this man has been taken pillaging and murdering; he ought to purchase life by his communications, but he does not wish to speak; take him away then, and shoot him."

The prisoner turned pale. The two soldiers who had brought him in took him by the the arms, and led him towards the door; whilst the prince, turning towards Marshal Grammont, appeared to have already forgotten the order he had given.

Having reached the threshold of the door, the prisoner stopped;

but the soldiers, who only considered their orders, wished to force him along.

"One moment," said the prisoner, in French: "I am willing to speak, your excellence."

"Aha!" said the prince, laughing, "I knew well enough we should come to that at last. I have a wonderful secret for unlocking tongues. Young men, take advantage of this lesson, when you come to have a command."

"But," said the prisoner, "it is on condition that your excellence will swear that my life shall be safe."

"On the word of a gentleman," said the prince.

"Then put your questions, your excellence."

"Where did the army pass the Lys?"

"Between St. Venant and Aire."

"By whom is it commanded?"

"By the Count de Fuonsaldagna, by General Beck, and by the Archduke in person."

"Of how many men is it composed?"

"Of eighteen thousand men, and thirty-six pieces of cannon."

"And its march?"

"On Lens."

"There, do you see, gentlemen," said the prince, turning with an air of triumph towards Marshal Grammont and the other officers.

"Yes, your excellence," replied the marshal; "you have divined all that it was possible for human intellect to conjecture."

"Recal le Plessis, Bellièvre, Villequier, and d'Erlac," said the prince; "recal all the troops that are on this side the Lys, and let them hold themselves in readiness to march to-night. In all probability, we shall attack the enemy."

"But, your excellence," said Marshal Grammont, "consider that, in uniting all our disposable forces, we shall not be able to muster more than thirteen thousand men."

"Marshal," replied the prince, with a look peculiar to himself, "it is with small armies that all great battles are gained."

Then turning towards the prisoner, he said, "Take this man, and

guard him carefully. His life depends upon his communication: should it be true, he shall be liberated; if false, he shall be shot."

The prisoner was led off.

"Count de Guiche," said the prince, "it is a long time since you have seen your father. Remain with him. Sir," continued he, turning towards Raoul, "if you are not too much fatigued, follow me."

"To the end of the world, your excellence!" exclaimed Raoul, feeling for the young general, who appeared so worthy of his reputation, an inconceivable enthusiasm.

The prince smiled. He despised flatterers, but greatly esteemed enthusiasts.

"And what am I to do, your excellence?" inquired Marshal Grammont.

"Remain to receive the troops. I will either come for them myself, or will send a messenger for you to lead them to me. Twenty of the best mounted guards will be quite sufficient for my escort."

"It is little enough," said the marshal.

"It is quite sufficient," said the prince. "Have you a good horse, M. de Bragelonne?"

"Mine was killed yesterday, and at present I am using that of my lacquey."

"Go and choose one that will suit you in my stables. And have no false modesty, but take that which you think the best horse. You will want him, perhaps, this evening, but certainly to-morrow."

Raoul did not wait to be told twice: he knew that with superiors, especially when those superiors are princes, the height of politeness consisted in prompt and unhesitating obedience. He therefore went to the stables, and selected a dun Andalusian horse, which he saddled and bridled himself; for Athos had charged him, in moments of danger, to trust these important cares to no one; and he rejoined the prince, who was just mounting his horse.

"Now, sir," said he to Raoul, "will you give me the letter of which you are the bearer."

Raoul presented the letter to the prince.

"Keep near me," said he.

The prince clapped spurs to his horse, hooked his bridle to the pommel of his saddle, as he was accustomed to do when he wished to have his hands free, opened Madame de Longueville's letter, and went off at a gallop towards Lens, accompanied by Raoul, and followed by his small escort; whilst the messengers, who were to recal the troops, set off at full speed in opposite directions.

The prince read as he went.

"Sir," said he, an instant after, "they speak most favourably of you. I have only one thing to tell you, which is, that from the little that I have heard and seen, I think still more highly of you than they have spoken."

Raoul bowed to his horse's neck.

In the meantime, at every step that brought them closer to Lens, the firing of cannon appeared nearer. The prince's look was directed, with the intenseness of a bird of prey, on the point whence this sound came. It might almost have been imagined that he had the power of piercing through the screen of trees which were before him, and which bounded the horizon; and from time to time his nostrils dilated, as if he was anxious to inhale the smell of powder.

At last the sound of the cannon was so near, that it was evident that they were not more than a league from the field of battle. In fact, at a turn of the road, they could see the little village of Aunay.

The peasants were in great confusion: the report of the cruelty of the Spaniards had spread abroad, and excited general consternation; the women had therefore already fled, and retired towards Vitry: some few men only remained.

At the prince's appearance they ran up: one of them recognised him.

"Ah, your excellence," said he, "are you come to drive away all those beggarly Spaniards, and those brigands of Lorraine?"

"Yes," said the prince, "if you will act as my guide."

"Most willingly, your excellence. Where does your highness wish me to conduct you?"

"To some elevated spot, whence I may see Lens, and its neighbourhood."

" "In that case, I am your man."

"Can I trust you? Are you a good Frenchman?"

"I am an old soldier of Rocroy, your excellence."

"Here," said the prince, giving him his purse—"this for Rocroy. Now, do you wish to have a horse, or do you prefer going on foot?"

"On foot, your excellence, on foot: I have always served in the infantry. Besides, I expect to lead your highness through paths where you will yourself be obliged to dismount."

"Come along, then," said the prince, "and do not let us lose any time."

The peasant set off, running before the prince's horse. Then, at about a hundred paces from the village, he took a little blind path at the bottom of a pretty valley; and for about half a league they proceeded thus, under the cover of the trees, the artillery sounding so near, that, at each report, they might have naturally expected to hear the whistling of the balls. At last they came to a path, which quitted the direct road to climb up the side of the mountain. The peasant took this path, requesting the prince to follow him. He dismounted; and ordering one of his aides-du-camp and Raoul to do the same, and the others to remain there, and keep a good look-out, he began to ascend the path.

In ten minutes they reached the ruins of an old chateau: these ruins crowned the summit of the hill, from which they could command a view of the surrounding country. At barely a league off, they could perceive Lens, reduced to the last extremity; and before Lens, all the enemy's army.

At a single glance, the prince embraced the whole extent of country which was spread before his eyes, from Lens even to Vismy. In an instant the whole plan of the battle, which on the next day was to save France a second time from invasion, displayed itself before his mind. He took a pencil, tore a leaf from his tablets, and wrote—

"My dear Marshal,

"In one hour Lens will be in the enemy's hands. Come and rejoin me: bring the whole army with you. I shall be at Vendin, to place them in position. To-morrow we shall retake Lens, and beat the enemy."

Then turning to Raoul: "Go, sir," said he, "set off, full speed, and put this letter into M. de Grammont's hands."

Raoul bowed, took the paper, ran down the mountain, threw himself on his horse, and set off full gallop. In a quarter of an hour he had reached the marshal.

A part of the troops were already arrived, and the others were expected every moment. The marshal put himself at the head of all the disposable infantry and cavalry, and took the road to Vendin, leaving the Duke of Chatillon to bring up the rest. All the artillery was ready to depart, and at once marched forward.

It was seven o'clock in the evening when the marshal reached the place appointed for the meeting, where he found the prince awaiting him. As he had foreseen, Lens had fallen, almost at the moment Raoul was leaving him. The cessation of the cannonade announced that event. They waited for the night; and, as the darkness increased, the troops successively arrived. Orders had been issued that no drum should be beat, and no trumpet sound.

At nine o'clock, the night had set in, but a last lingering ray still illumined the plain. They then marched in silence, the prince leading the column. Having got beyond Aunay, the army could perceive Lens: three or four houses were in flames; and a dull sound, that indicated the agony of a town taken by assault, reached the ears of the soldiers.

The prince assigned to each his post. The Marshal de Grammont was to hold the extreme left, and rest upon Méricourt; the Duke of Chatillon led the centre; the prince himself commanded the right wing, and was to rest upon Aunay.

The order of battle on the following day was to be the same as the positions now taken up; so that every one, on awaking, would find himself on the ground upon which he was to manœuvre. The movement was executed in the most profound silence, and with the most exact precision. At ten o'clock every one was in position; at half-past ten, the prince visited all the posts, and gave the orders for the next day.

Three things were most particularly recommended to the commanders, who were to see them scrupulously followed by the soldiers:

the first, that the different corps should take care so to march, that the cavalry and infantry should be in the same line, and that each should keep its proper interval or distance; the second, not to charge, except at the charging pace or step; the third, to let the enemy fire first.

The prince gave the Count de Guiche to his father, and retained Bragelonne himself; but the two young men requested permission to pass the night together, which was granted.

A tent was pitched for them near that of the marshal. Although the day had been fatiguing, neither of them felt any inclination to sleep. Besides, the eve of battle is a serious and imposing thing, even to old soldiers, and much more so to young men, who are about to view this terrible spectacle for the first time. On the eve of battle, a thousand things are thought of, which have hitherto been forgotten, but which now recur to the mind. On the eve of battle, common acquaintances become friends, and friends become brothers. It is superfluous to say, that, if there be any more tender sentiment at the bottom of the heart, that sentiment then naturally increases in intensity.

It appeared as if some such feeling was experienced by each of the young men; for in a short time they both sat down at the end of the tent, and began writing on their knees. The letters were long, and soon filled. Occasionally they looked up, and smiled at each other. They understood one another, without explanation. These two elegant and delicate organizations were so constructed as to sympathize with each other without speaking.

The letters being finished, they enclosed them in double envelopes, that no one might read the address without tearing open the first envelope; then they exchanged letters.

"If any misfortune should befal me—" said Bragelonne.

"If I should be killed—" said de Guiche.

"Do not distress yourself about that," they both said.

Then, having embraced like brothers, they wrapped themselves in their cloaks, and slept that fresh and graceful sleep, which is peculiar to birds, flowers, and children.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A DINNER OF OLDEN TIMES.

The second interview of the old musketeers was not formal and threatening, like the first. Athos, with his usual superior good sense, had concluded that the table would be the quickest centre of attraction, and the promoter of the most complete reunion; and at the very moment when his friends, awed by his superiority and sobriety, dared not to speak of one of those good dinners of olden times, eaten either at the *Pomme-du-Pin*, or the *Parpaillot*, he first made the proposition to meet round some well-served table, and to abandon themselves without reserve, each to his own individual character and manners—an abandonment, which had erewhile maintained that good intelligence amongst them, that had acquired for them the title of "the inseparables."

The proposition was agreeable to all, but more especially to d'Artagnan, who eagerly craved a renewal of the good taste and gaiety of the conversations of his youth. For a very long time, his fine and lively talent had received but meagre fare—vile food, as he himself termed it. Porthos, on the eve of becoming a baron, was enchanted at the opportunity of studying, in Athos and Aramis, the manners of people of quality. Aramis wished to gain, through d'Artagnan and Porthos, some information from the Palais Royal; and also to provide, against all emergencies, friends so devoted, who had formerly supported his quarrels with such prompt and invincible swords.

As for Athos, he was the only one who had nothing to expect or to receive from the others, and who was only influenced by a sentiment of true nobleness of soul, and of pure friendship.

It was therefore agreed that each should give his real address, and that, upon the requisition of one of the associates, a meeting should be convoked at a famous tavern in the rue de la Monnaie, known by the sign of the Hermitage. The first meeting was fixed for the following Wednesday, exactly at eight o'clock in the evening.

In fact, on that day, the four friends arrived punctually at the appointed hour, and each from his own peculiar quarter. Porthos had been trying a new horse; d'Artagnan came down from his guard at the Louvre; Aramis had been to visit one of his penitents in the neighbourhood; and Athos, who had taken up his abode in the rue Guénégaud, was close by. They were therefore agreeably surprised on all meeting at the door of the Hermitage; Athos having come from the rue de Pont Neuf, Porthos from the rue du Roule, d'Artagnan from the rue des Fosses St. Germain-l'Auxerrois, and Aramis from the rue de Bethisy.

The first salutations which were exchanged between the four friends, precisely on account of the studied manner which each used in these demonstrations, made them appear rather forced, and there was a kind of stiffness in the commencement of the repast itself. It was quite apparent that d'Artagnan's laugh was forced, that Athos constrained himself to drink, Aramis to relate an anecdote, and Porthos to be silent. Athos perceived this embarrassment, and, to apply a prompt remedy, ordered four bottles of champagne.

At this order, given with his usual tranquillity, the countenance of d'Artagnan was seen to clear, and Porthos's brow to expand. Aramis was astonished: he knew that Athos not only did not drink, but that he even experienced a certain repugnance to wine. This astonishment was redoubled, when he saw him pour out a bumper, and drink it with his ancient gusto. D'Artagnan also filled and emptied his glass. Porthos and Aramis hob'd and nob'd theirs. The four bottles were instantly emptied. It seemed as if they wished to drive away their former thoughts as quickly as possible.

In one moment, this excellent specific had dissipated even the smallest reserve which could remain at the bottom of their hearts. the four friends began to talk louder, without waiting till one had finished before the other began, and each to assume at table his own favourite position. Shortly—unheard-of thing!—Aramis loosened two clasps of his doublet; which, when Porthos saw, he unfastened all his.

Their battles, their long journeys, the wounds given and received, formed the first subject of their conversation. Then they passed to

the silent and secret struggle, sustained against him whom they now called the great cardinal.

"Faith," said Aramis, "we have praised the dead quite enough: let us abuse the living a little. I should like to abuse Mazarin a little: is it allowable?"

"Certainly," said d'Artagnan, bursting into laughter—"certainly: let us have your tale; and I will applaud it, if it be a good one."

"A great prince," said Aramis, "whose alliance Mazarin much sought, was requested by him to send a list of the conditions upon which he would do him the honour of coming to an agreement with him. The prince, who had some repugnance to treating with such a vagabond, made the list very unwillingly, and sent it to him. In this list there were three conditions, which much displeased Mazarin, but he offered to the prince to give them up for ten thousand crowns."

"Ah!" exclaimed the three friends, "that was not dear, and he was sure of being taken at his word. And what did the prince do?"

"The prince immediately sent Mazarin fifty thousand livres, entreating him never to write to him again; and offering him twenty thousand more, if he would engage never to speak to him again."

"And what did Mazarin do?"

"Was he much annoyed?" inquired Athos.

"Had he the messenger well beaten?" demanded Porthos.

"He pocketed the money," said d'Artagnan.

"You have guessed it, d'Artagnan," answered Aramis.

And all burst into such a violent fit of laughter, that the host came up to see whether they wanted anything; for he thought, in fact, that they were fighting.

At last the mirth grew calm.

"May one have a rap at M. de Beaufort?" demanded d'Artagnan "I much wish it."

"Proceed," said Aramis, who well understood that acute and brave Gascon mind which never receded one step on any ground.

"And you, Athos?" said d'Artagnan.

"I swear, on the word of a gentleman, that we will laugh, if you give us a good anecdote," replied Athos.

"I will then begin," said d'Artagnan.—"M. de Beaufort, talking with one of the friends of M. le Prince, told him, that, during the first quarrels of Mazarin and the parliament, he had one day had a dispute with M. de Chavigny, and that, seeing that he was attached to the new cardinal—he, who was so closely connected with the old one—he had cuffed him *(gourmé)* well. This friend, who knew that M. de Beaufort had a free hand, was nevertheless much astonished at the circumstance, and hastened to tell it to the prince. The thing spread about, and every one turned his back on M. de Chavigny. He, naturally enough, sought for an explanation of this general coldness. There was some hesitation in telling him; but at last some one ventured to inform him that every one was surprised at his allowing himself to be cuffed by M. de Beaufort, although he was a prince.

"'And who said that the prince cuffed me?' demanded Chavigny.

"'The prince himself,' replied his friend.

"They traced the story to its source, and found the very person to whom the prince had made the assertion; who, being adjured by his honour to speak the truth, repeated and confirmed it.

"Chavigny, in utter despair at such a calumny, which he could not at all understand, declared to his friends that he would rather die than bear such an insult. Therefore he sent two friends to the prince, to demand if it was true that he had said that he had cuffed M. de Chavigny.

"'I said it, and I repeat it,' replied the prince, 'for it is true.'

"'Your excellence,' said one of Chavigny's cousins, 'will allow me to observe, that blows, given to a gentleman, degrade him who gives them, quite as much as him who receives them.'

"'Well, then,' demanded M. de Beaufort, in utter astonishment, 'who has received any blows, and who speaks of beating?'

"'Why you, your excellence, who pretend that you have beaten—'

"'Whom?'

" ' M. de Chavigny.'

" ' I?'

" ' Did you not *cuff (gourmé)* M. de Chavigny, at least, as you say, your excellence.'

" ' Yes.'

" ' Well, he denies it.'

" ' Ah! for example!' said the prince, ' I cuffed him so well—for here are my very words,' added M. de Beaufort, with all that dignity with which you are so familiar—' My dear Chavigny, you are very wrong to assist such a rascal as that Mazarin.'

" ' Ah, your excellence,' cried the second gentleman, ' I understand—it is reproved *(gourmander)* you meant to say.'

" ' Reprove or cuff, (*gourmander*, or *gourmer*,) what matters which?' said the prince; ' is it not the same thing? Really, you makers of words are very pedantic.' "

They laughed much at this philological mistake of M. de Beaufort, whose blunders of this kind were beginning to be quite proverbial; and it was agreed, that, party spirit being banished for ever from these friendly meetings, d'Artagnan and Porthos might rally the princes, on condition that Athos and Aramis might cuff (*gourmer*) Mazarin.

" Faith," said d'Artagnan to his two friends, " you are right to wish him ill; for, on his part, I protest to you that Mazarin has not the kindest intentions towards you."

" Bah! really?" said Athos. " If I thought that the rascal knew my name, I would be unbaptized, for fear any one should think that I knew him."

" He does not know you by your name, but by your actions: he knows that there are two gentlemen who more especially contributed to M. de Beaufort's escape, and he is making an active search for them, I can assure you."

" Through whom?"

" Through me."

" How, through you?"

" Yes, he sent for me again this morning, to ask whether I had got any intelligence of you."

"And what did you say?"

"That I had not yet got any, but was going to dine with two persons who might give me some."

"And you actually told him that?" said Porthos, with his broad grin spread over all his large face. "Bravo! And does not this frighten you, Athos?"

"No," said Athos, "it is not Mazarin's inquiry that I dread."

"You?" said Aramis: "tell me now what you *do* dread."

"Nothing; at least in so far as the present time is concerned."

"And in the past?" said Porthos.

"Ah, in the past—that is another thing," replied Athos, with a sigh—"in the past, and in the future."

"Have you any fear for your young Raoul?" inquired Aramis.

"Good," said d'Artagnan, "one is never killed in the first action."

"Nor in the second," said Aramis.

"Nor in the third," said Porthos. "Besides, when one is killed, one returns to life again. Witness ourselves."

"No," said Athos, "it is not Raoul that disquiets me; for he will behave, I hope, like a gentleman; and if he is killed, well, it will be bravely. But observe, should that misfortune happen, well then—"

Athos passed his hand over his pale brow.

"Well, then?" said Aramis, "well, then, I should regard it as an expiation."

"Ah!" said d'Artagnan, "I know what you mean."

"And I, also," said Aramis. "But you must not think about that, Athos."

"I do not understand," said Porthos.

"The business at Armentières," said d'Artagnan to him in a low voice.

"The business of Armentières?" he demanded.

"My Lady—"

"Oh, yes!" said Porthos, "it is true; for my part, I had forgotten it."

Athos looked at him with his penetrating eye. "And you had really forgotten it, Porthos?" said he.

"Faith, and I had then," replied Porthos: "it was a long time ago."

"The thing therefore does not weigh upon your conscience?"

"Faith, and it does not," said Porthos.

"And you, Aramis?"

"Why, I sometimes think of it," said Aramis, "as on one of those cases of conscience which admits of much discussion."

"And you, d'Artagnan?"

"Why, as for me, I confess that when my mind even dwells on that terrible event, I can only think of the clay-cold body of poor Madame de Bonacieux. Yes, yes," he murmured, "I have experienced many a regret for the victim, but no remorse for her murderer."

Athos shook his head with an air of doubt.

"Consider," said Aramis, "that if you admit divine justice, and its participation in human affairs, this woman was punished by the will of God. We were the instruments—that is all."

"But the free will, Aramis?"

"And what does the judge do? He has his free will also, and condemns fearlessly. What does the executioner do? He is the master of his own arm, and yet he strikes without remorse."

"The executioner," murmured Athos; and they saw that this recollection struck him.

"I know that it is awful," said d'Artagnan; "but when I think that we killed the English, the people of la Rochelle, and the Spaniards, nay, even the French, who never did us any greater harm than taking aim at and missing us—who had never any greater fault than that of crossing swords with us, and not being able to parry quick enough—I excuse myself for my share of the murder of this woman, upon my honour."

As for me," said Porthos, "now that you have brought it to my recollection, Athos, I can see the scene as if I were now there. Her ladyship was there, where you now sit—[Athos turned pale.] I was where d'Artagnan sits. I had by my side a sword that

would cut like a Damascus blade: you must remember it, Aramis, for you called it Balizarde. Well, I swear to you three, if the executioner of Bethune—was it of Bethune?—yes, faith, it was of Bethune—well, if he had not been there, I would have cut off the head of that wicked wretch, without any consideration—aye, even after consideration. For she was a wicked woman."

"And then," said Aramis, in the tone of careless philosophy he had assumed since he entered the church, and in which there was much more of atheism than of trust in God; "what is the use of thinking of all this? What is done, is done. We shall confess this deed at the last hour; and God will know, better than we can, if it is a crime, a fault, or a meritorious action. Do I repent it? you ask. Faith, I do not. Upon my honour, and by the cross, I only repent it because she was a woman."

"But the greatest comfort in all this is," said d'Artagnan, "that of all that has happened, there remains not the slightest trace."

"She had a son," said Athos.

"Yes, I know that well enough," said d'Artagnan, "and you have talked to me about him. But who knows what has become of him? The serpent being dead, the brood is also dead! Can you suppose that de Winter, his uncle, will have nourished this young serpent? De Winter will have condemned the son, as he condemned the mother."

"Then," said Athos, "misfortune must befal de Winter; for the child had done no harm."

"The child is dead, or the deuce is in it," said Porthos. "There is such a disturbance in that horrible country—at least, so d'Artagnan declares."

At this very moment, when Porthos's reasoning was just restoring some gaiety to their serious countenances, a noise was heard on the staircase, and some one knocked at the door

"Enter," said Athos.

"Gentlemen," said the host, "there is a servant, in great haste, who wishes to speak with one of you."

"Which of us?" they all inquired.

"To him who calls himself the Count de la Fère."

"It is me," said Athos. "And what is the name of this servant?"

"Grimaud."

"Ah!" said Athos, turning pale: "already returned? What then can have happened to Bragelonne?"

"Let him come in," said d'Artagnan, "let him come in."

Grimaud, who had already mounted the stairs, and waited on the landing-place, rushed into the room, and dismissed the host by a sign.

The host shut the door: and the four friends remained in eager expectation. The agitation of Grimaud, his paleness, the perspiration which bedewed his countenance, the dust which soiled his dress, all declared that he was the messenger of some important and terrible communication.

"Gentlemen," said he, "that woman had a child; the child has become a man—the tigress had a little one; the tiger is loose—it is coming to you—take care!"

Athos looked at his friends with a melancholy smile; Porthos felt at his side for his sword, which was hung against the wall; Aramis seized hold of a knife; and d'Artagnan rose up.

"What do you mean, Grimaud?" said the latter

"That her ladyship's son has left England—that he is in France—that he is coming to Paris, if he be not here already."

"The devil!" cried Porthos—"are you quite sure?"

"Quite sure," answered Grimaud.

This declaration produced a long silence. Grimaud was so exhausted by fatigue, that he fell upon a chair.

Athos filled a glass of champagne, and carried it to him.

"Well, after all," said d'Artagnan, "should he live, and come to Paris—we have faced many others—let him come!"

"Yes," said Porthos, looking most affectionately at his sword, hanging against the wall—"we wait for him: let him come!"

"Besides, he is only a child," said Aramis.

Grimaud rose up. "A child! Do you know what he has done, this child? Disguised as a monk, he has discovered all the circum-

stances, by confessing the executioner of Bethune; and after having received his confession—after having learnt everything from him—for absolution he planted this dagger in his breast. There it is, still red and moist; for it is not more than thirty hours since it was drawn from the wound." And Grimaud threw the dagger on the table.

D'Artagnan, Porthos, and Aramis arose with a spontaneous movement, and secured their swords. Athos alone remained in his seat, calm and thoughtful.

"And you say that he was dressed as a monk, Grimaud?"

"Yes, as a monk of St. Augustin."

"What sort of a man is he?"

"About my height, as the host informed me, thin and pale, with clear blue eyes, and light hair."

'And—he did not see Raoul, did he?" inquired Athos.

"On the contrary, they met, and it was the viscount himself who conducted him to the bed of the wounded man."

Athos arose, without saying a word, and proceeded to unhook his sword from the wall.

"Ah, gentlemen," said d'Artagnan, endeavouring to laugh, "do you know that we look very much like a parcel of young girls? We four men, who have bearded armies without winking—we are actually trembling before a child!"

"Yes," replied Athos, "but this child comes in the name of God."

And they hastily left the tavern.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE LETTER OF CHARLES THE FIRST.

The reader must now pass the Seine with us, and accompany us to the gate of the Carmelite convent in the rue St. Jacques.

It is eleven o'clock in the morning, and the holy sisters have just said a mass for the success of Charles the First s arms. On leaving the church, a woman and a young girl, clothed in black, one as a widow, the other as an orphan, returned to their cell. The woman knelt down on a footstool of painted wood, and at some paces from her, stood the young girl, leaning against a chair, and weeping.

The woman must have been beautiful, but it was evident that sorrow had destroyed her beauty. The young girl was charming, and her tears even added to her charms. The woman appeared to be about forty years old; the young girl was fourteen.

"My God!" said the kneeling suppliant, "preserve my husband and my sons, and take my life, so sad and miserable!"

"My God!" said the young girl, "preserve my mother!"

"Your mother can do no more for you in this world, Henrietta," said the afflicted woman: "your mother has no longer either throne, husband, sons, money, or friends: your mother, my poor girl, is forsaken by the whole world." And the woman, throwing herself into her daughter's arms, gave way to a paroxysm of tears and sobs.

"Take courage, my dear mother," said the young girl.

"Ah! kings are unfortunate this year," said the mother, resting her head on her daughter's shoulder, "and no one thinks of us in this country, for every one is thinking of his own affairs. Whilst your brother was with us, he sustained me; but he is gone, and can now give neither his father nor myself any information concerning him. I have pledged my last jewels, I have sold all my own and your clothes, to pay the wages of his servants, who refused to accompany him until I made that sacrifice. Now, we are compelled to live at the expense of these holy sisters: we are God's poor pensioners!"

"But why do you not apply to the queen, your sister?" demanded the young girl.

"Alas!" said the afflicted woman, "the queen my sister, is no longer queen, my child: another reigns in her name. Some day you will be able to understand all this."

"Well, then, to the king, your nephew. Will you let me speak to him? You know that he loves me, mother."

"Alas! the king, my nephew, is not yet king; and he himself—you know very well that Laporte has told us so a hundred times—he himself is in great want of every thing."

"Then let us call upon God!" said the young girl. And she knelt down beside her mother.

These two females, who thus prayed side by side, were the daughter and grand-daughter of Henry IV., the wife and daughter of Charles I.

They had just finished their prayer, when a sister of the convent knocked gently at the door of the cell.

"Come in, my sister," said the oldest of the two females, wiping her tears, and rising from her knees.

The nun gently and respectfully opened the door. "I hope that your majesty will pardon this interruption of your meditations," said she; "but a foreign gentleman is in the parlour, who has just arrived from England, and who requests the honour of presenting a letter to your majesty."

"Oh! a letter from the king, perhaps: some news from your father; do you hear, Henrietta?"

"Yes, madame, I hear, and I hope."

"And who is this gentleman?"

"A gentleman from forty-five to fifty years of age."

"His name? Did he give his name?"

"Lord de Winter."

"Lord de Winter!" exclaimed the queen; "my husband's friend! Oh, let him come in, let him come in."

And the queen ran to meet the messenger, whose hand she eagerly seized.

Lord de Winter, on entering the cell, knelt down and presented the letter, enclosed in a gold case.

"Ah, my lord," said the queen, "you bring us three things which we have not seen for a long time—gold, a devoted friend, and a letter from my husband and king."

De Winter again bowed: he was so much affected that he could not speak.

"My lord," said the queen, pointing to the letter, "you may

imagine that I am most anxious to know the contents of this paper."

"I will retire, madame," said de Winter.

"No, remain," said the queen: "we will read it in your presence. Do you not understand that I have a thousand questions to put to you?"

De Winter retired a step or two, and remained silent.

The mother and daughter had retired into an embrasure of the window, and were reading most eagerly, the daughter leaning on her mother's arm, the following letter:—

"Madam, and my dear wife—

"At length we have reached the termination. All the resources which God has left are all concentrated in the camp at Naseby, whence I write to you in great haste. Here I await the army of my rebellious subjects, and I am going to contend once more against them. A conqueror, the struggle will be everlasting; conquered, I am completely ruined. I wish, under the latter circumstances—(alas! in my present state, it is necessary to provide against everything)—I wish to attempt to gain the shores of France. But can they, or would they, receive an unhappy king, who will carry such a deleterious example into a country already torn to pieces by civil dissensions? Your prudence and affection will be my best guides on this point. The bearer of this letter will tell you, madame, what I dare not trust to the chance of accident: he will tell you what I expect from you. I also charge him with my blessing to my children, and every sentiment of affection for yourself, madam, and my dear wife."

The letter was signed, instead of "Charles, King,"——"Charles, as yet King."

This melancholy perusal, the effect of which de Winter watched on the queen's countenance, yet brought back to her eyes a beam of hope.

"Let him be no longer king!" she exclaimed: "let him be vanquished, banished, and proscribed—only let him live! Alas! the throne is in these times too perilous a post, for me to wish him to retain it. But tell me, my lord," continued the queen, "conceal

nothing from me—where is the king? Is his situation as desperate as he imagines?"

"Alas, madame, more desperate than he himself imagines. His majesty has such a good heart, that he cannot conceive hatred—so sincere, that he does not suspect treachery. England is seized with such a spirit of mutability, that I much fear it will only be extinguished in blood."

"But Lord Montrose," replied the queen: "I heard of his vast and rapid successes—of battles gained at Inverlochy, Auldone, Alfort, and Kilsyth: I heard it reported that he was marching on the frontier, to join the king."

"Yes, madame, but at the frontier he met Leslie. He had wearied victory by his superhuman enterprises, and she there deserted him. Montrose, beaten at Philipshaugh, was forced to disband the remnants of his army, and fly, disguised as a servant. He is at Bergen, in Norway."

"And may God preserve him!" said the queen: "it is at least a consolation to know, that those who have so often risked their lives for us, are in safety. And now, my lord, that I see the true position of the king, that is to say, his desperate position, tell me what you have to say to me from my royal husband."

"Well then, madame, the king wishes you to endeavour to sound the feelings of the king and queen towards him."

"Alas! you know them," replied the queen. "The king is yet but a child; and the queen is a woman, and a weak one too. M. Mazarin is everything."

"Would he, then, play in France, the character which Cromwell is playing in England?"

"Oh, no! he is a cunning and crafty Italian, who perhaps dreams of crime, but has not the courage to execute it; and, exactly contrary to Cromwell, who manages the legislature, Mazarin has only the queen's support in his struggle with the parliament."

"That is another reason why he should protect a king whom the parliament oppresses."

The queen shook her head bitterly. "If I am to form my opinion

of him from his conduct to myself, the cardinal will do nothing, or, perhaps, will even oppose us. My presence, and that of my daughter, in France, are a burden to him; much more, consequently, would be that of the king. My lord," added the queen, with a melancholy smile, "it is sad and almost disgraceful to confess, but we have passed the winter without money, without linen, almost without bread, and often not leaving our beds for want of fuel!"

"Horrible!" exclaimed de Winter—"the daughter of Henry IV.—the wife of Charles I.! Why did you not apply, madame, to the first of us who happened to come?"

"See the hospitality a minister affords a queen, to which minister the king now wishes me to apply!"

"But I heard a report of a marriage between the Prince of Wales and Mademoiselle d'Orleans," said de Winter.

"Yes, I had hopes of it for a short time. The children loved each other; but the queen, who at first promoted the match, changed her opinion; and M. d'Orleans, who at first encouraged the connexion, forbade his daughter to think any more of the union. Ah! my lord," continued the queen, without endeavouring to conceal her tears, "it is far better to contend, as the king has done, and to die, as he perhaps is about to do, that to live the mendicant I am!"

"Courage, madame," said de Winter—"Courage! Do not despair. It is the interest of the French crown, so shaken at this moment, to oppose rebellion amongst a people so close as we are. Mazarin is a statesman, and he will understand this necessity."

"But are you sure," said the queen, with an air of doubt, "that you have not been anticipated?"

"By whom?" demanded de Winter.

"By the Joyces, Priedges, and Cromwells."

"By a tailor, a carman, and a brewer! Ah! I hope, madame, that the cardinal would never enter into alliance with such men as those."

"What is he himself?" demanded the queen.

"But for the honour of the king—for that of the queen——"

"Come, let us hope that he will do something for that honour,"

said the Queen Henrietta: "your friendship is so eloquent, my lord, that you encourage me. Give me your hand, then, and let us go to the minister."

"Madame," said de Winter, bowing, "I am overwhelmed by such an honour."

"But, after all, should he refuse," said the queen, stopping short —"and should the king lose the battle?"

"His majesty will then fly to Holland, where, I have heard, the Prince of Wales now is."

"And can his majesty reckon on many such followers as yourself in his flight?"

"Alas, no, madame!" replied de Winter; "but the case is provided for, and I am come to seek allies in France."

"Allies!" ejaculated the queen, shaking her head.

"Madame," replied de Winter, "let me but find some old friends that I had formerly, and I answer for everything."

'Come, then," said the queen, with that painful doubt peculiar to people who have been long unfortunate—"come, then, and may God assist you!"

The queen entered her carriage, and de Winter on horseback, followed by two servants, rode by its side.

CHAPTER XL.

CROMWELL'S LETTER.

At the very moment when the Queen Henrietta left the Carmelite convent, to proceed to the Palais Royal, a cavalier dismounted from his horse at the gate of this regal abode, and announced to the guards that he had tidings of importance to communicate to Cardinal Mazarin.

Although the cardinal was often timid, yet, as he had oftener need of intelligence, he was sufficiently accessible. It was not at the first door that the real difficulty was found; the second even was easily passed; but it was at the third, that, besides the guards and ushers,

the faithful Bernouin kept watch—a Cerberus whom no word could soften, no branch, were it even of gold, could charm. It was, therefore, at the third door, that he who solicited or demanded an audience, was obliged to submit to a formal examination.

The cavalier, having left his horse fastened to the bars of the gate in the court-yard, mounted the great staircase, and addressing the guards in the first room—"M. le Cardinal Mazarin?" said he.

"Go forward," replied the guards, without elevating their noses from their cards or dice, and delighted, moreover, at indicating in this manner that they did not execute the office of lacqueys.

The cavalier entered the second room. This was guarded by musketeers and ushers. He there repeated his demand.

"Have you a letter of introduction?" demanded an usher, going up to the applicant

"I have one."

"Go in, and ask for M. Bernouin," said the usher. And he opened the door of the third chamber.

Whether by chance, or because he kept his usual post, Bernouin was standing behind this door, and had overheard everything.—"It is me, sir, that you seek," said he: "from whom is the letter that you bring for his eminence?"

"From General Oliver Cromwell," replied the stranger: "will you announce me to his eminence, and inform me whether he will receive me or not?" And he remained standing, in the gloomy and severe manner which was peculiar to the Puritans.

Bernouin, after having cast a scrutinizing glance over the young man, entered the cardinal's cabinet, and delivered the envoy's message.

"A man who is the bearer of a letter from Oliver Cromwell?" said Mazarin: "and what kind of man?"

"A genuine Englishman, your eminence, with hair a lightish red, more red than light; eye, a grayish blue, more gray than blue; and, to sum up all, pride and formality."

"Let him give you his letter."

"His excellency demands the letter," said Bernouin, returning from the cabinet to the antechamber.

"His excellency will not see the letter without the bearer," replied the young man; "but, to convince you that I am really the bearer of a letter, see, there it is."

Bernouin looked at the seal, and seeing that the letter came from Cromwell, he turned to go back to Mazarin.

"Add," said the young man, "that I am not a mere messenger, but an envoy extraordinary."

Bernouin re-entered the cabinet, and returning in a few minutes he said, as he held the door open—"Enter, sir."

Mazarin had required all these comings and goings to recover himself from the emotion which the announcement of this letter had caused; but acute as was his intellect, he in vain sought for the motive which had induced Cromwell to enter into communication with him.

The young man appeared at the door of the cabinet, holding his hat in one hand, and the letter in the other.

Mazarin rose up. "You have a letter of credence for me, sir," said he.

"Here it is, your excellence," replied the young man.

Mazarin took the letter, unsealed it, and read—

"M. Mordaunt, one of my secretaries, will deliver this letter of introduction to Cardinal Mazarin, at Paris. He is the bearer of a second confidential letter for his eminence."

"Very well, M. Mordaunt," said Mazarin, "give me the second letter, and sit down."

The young man drew a second letter from his pocket, presented it to the cardinal, and sat down.

In the meantime the cardinal, still busied with his reflections, had taken the letter, and, without unsealing it, he turned it over and over in his hand; but, to delude the messenger, he began to question him in his usual manner, being convinced from experience that few men could conceal anything from him, when he questioned and examined them at the same time.

"You are very young, M. Mordaunt," said he, "for the rough office of an ambassador, where the oldest diplomatists often fail."

"Your excellence, I am twenty-three years old; but your emi-

nence is mistaken in calling me young. I am older than you are, although I have not your wisdom."

"How is that, sir?" said Mazarin: "I do not comprehend you."

"I say, your excellence, that years of suffering count double; and that I have had twenty years of suffering."

"Ah, yes, I understand," said Mazarin: "want of fortune—you are poor, are you not?" Then he added to himself, "These English revolutionists are all beggars and clowns."

"Your excellence, I ought to have, some day, a fortune of six millions; but it has been taken from me."

"You are not, therefore, a man of low rank," said Mazarin, in astonishment.

"If I bore my title, I should be a lord; and if I went by my real name, you would have heard one of the most illustrious that England can boast of."

"What name do you go by, then?"

"I am called M. Mordaunt," said the young man, bowing.

Mazarin comprehended that Cromwell's envoy wished to preserve his incognito. He was silent for a moment, but during that moment he had looked at him more earnestly than before. The young man was perfectly immoveable.

"The plague take these Puritans," said Mazarin, in a low voice, "they are cut out of marble." Then he added aloud, "But you have some relations?"

"I have one, your excellence."

"Then he will assist you."

"I went three times to implore his protection, and thrice did he make his valets drive me away."

"Oh, my God! my dear M. Mordaunt," said Mazarin, hoping to deceive the young man by his feigned commiseration, "your recital much interests me. You are, therefore, ignorant of your birth?"

"I have learnt it within a very short period."

"And up to the moment when you found it out

"I considered myself a foundling."

"Then you never saw your mother?"

"Yes, your excellence; when I was a child, she came three times

to my nurse's house. I remember the last time that she came, as if it had been yesterday."

"You have a good memory," said Mazarin.

"Yes, yes, your excellence," said the young man, in such a singular tone that the cardinal felt himself shudder.

"And who brought you up?" inquired Mazarin.

"A French nurse, who turned me off when I was five years old, because no one paid her any longer, and confiding to me the name of that relation, of whom my mother had often talked to her."

"And what then became of you?"

"Whilst I was crying and begging on the high road, a minister at Kingston took me in: he educated me in the Calvinistic religion, gave me all the knowledge he himself possessed, and assisted me in my researches after my family."

"And these researches—"

"Were fruitless: chance did everything for me."

"And did you discover what had become of your mother?"

"I learnt that she had been murdered by this relation, assisted by four of his friends. But I had already learnt that I had been degraded from my rank, and robbed of all my property by Charles I."

"Ah! now I understand why you serve M. Cromwell. You hate the king?"

"Yes, your excellence, I do hate him!" replied the young man.

Mazarin observed, with astonishment, the diabolical expression with which the young man uttered these words. As ordinary countenances colour with blood, so his countenance was tinted with bile, and became livid.

"Your history is a terrible one, M. Mordaunt, and sensibly touches me; but, happily for you, you serve a powerful master. He, no doubt, will aid you in your researches. Men of our stamp gain so much information."

"Your excellence, to a well-bred dog, it is only necessary to point out one end of a track, and he will be sure to arrive at the other."

"But would you wish me to speak to this relation whom you

have mentioned?" demanded Mazarin, who wanted to secure a friend near Cromwell.

"Thank your excellence—I will speak to him myself."

"But did you not say that he had treated you ill?"

"He will treat me better the next time I see him."

"Have you some means of softening him?"

"I have the means of making him fear me."

Mazarin looked at the young man; but perceiving the lightning flash which glanced from his eyes, he lowered his head; and feeling some embarrassment in continuing the conversation, he opened Cromwell's letter.

The young man's eyes gradually became dull and glassy as usual, and he fell into profound thought. After having read the first lines, Mazarin ventured to look if Mordaunt was not watching his countenance; and observing his indifference—

"Manage your own affairs, then," said he, almost imperceptibly shrugging his shoulders, "by people who at the same time perform their own! Let us see what this letter contains."

We give it literally.

"*To his Eminence, M. the Cardinal Mazarin.*

"Your Excellence,

"I am very desirous of knowing your opinions concerning the present state of affairs in England. The two kingdoms are so close to each other, that they must mutually occupy themselves with each other's situation. The English are almost unanimous in their opposition to the tyranny of Charles and his followers. Placed at the head of this movement by the public confidence, I can estimate its true nature and consequences more correctly than any other person. At this very time, I am about to fight a decisive battle with the king. I shall gain it; for the hopes of the nation, and the spirit of the Lord, are with me. This battle gained, the king has no farther resources in England or Scotland; and should he not be taken or killed, he will endeavour to pass over to France, to recruit his soldiers, and to obtain a reinforcement of arms and money. France has already received the Queen Henrietta, and, unintentionally no doubt, has cherished a brand of inextinguishable civil war in my country. But the queen

Henrietta is a daughter of France, and the hospitality of France was her due. As to King Charles, the question is quite different: in receiving and aiding him, France would condemn the actions of the people of England, and so essentially injure England herself, and more particularly the progress of that government which she hopes to establish, that such conduct would be equivalent to an open declaration of hostilities."

At this moment, Mazarin, much annoyed at the turn the letter was taking, again left off reading, and cast a cautious glance at the young man. He was still thinking. Mazarin therefore continued:—

"It is therefore absolutely indispensable for me to know immediately, your excellence, what are the views of France. The interests of that kingdom, and those of England, although apparently tending in an opposite direction, are really more united than any one might think. England has need of internal tranquillity, to complete the expulsion of the king; France has need of the same tranquillity, to establish the throne of her young monarch. You, as well as ourselves, require that internal peace, which we, thanks to the energy of your government, have almost acquired.

"Your disputes with the parliament—your violent dissensions with the princes, who one day fight for, and the next day against you—the popular obstinacy, directed by the coadjutor, the president Blanemesnil, and the counsellor Broussel—in fine, all that disorder which prevades the different ranks in the state, must make you look forward with doubt to the effect of a foreign war. For then England, in the highest state of excitement from her revolutionary principles, would join herself with Spain, who already desires the alliance. I therefore thought, your excellence—knowing the personal interest you have in the present circumstances—I therefore thought that you would prefer concentrating your own forces in the interior of France, and leaving those of England to its new government. This neutrality simply consists in excluding King Charles from the French territory, and in not assisting, by arms, money, or troops, that king who is an entire stranger to your country.

"My letter is therefore entirely confidential; and it is on that account that I send it by one whom I can so strictly trust. From a

feeling, which your excellence can estimate, it will precede the measures which I shall take after the events. Oliver Cromwell was of opinion, that it would be much better to reason with a mind so intelligent as that of Mazarin, than with a queen, who, although she is certainly to be admired for her firmness, must be far too much influenced by the prejudices of birth and divine right.

"Adieu, your excellence. If I should not have an answer in a fortnight, I shall consider my letter as not received.

"OLIVER CROMWELL.

"M. Mordaunt," said the cardinal, raising his voice so as to rouse the thinker, "my answer to this letter will be the more satisfactory to General Cromwell, the more convinced I am that it is unknown that I have written it. Therefore go, and wait for it at Boulogne-sur-Mer; and promise me that you will leave Paris tomorrow morning."

"I promise you that I will, your excellence," replied Mordaunt; "but how many days will your eminence make me wait for that answer."

"If you have not received it in ten days, you may leave the country."

Mordaunt bowed.

"That is not all, sir," continued Mazarin: "your own personal adventures have deeply touched me. Besides, Cromwell's letter gives you importance in my eyes as an ambassador. Tell me, then, what can I do for you?"

Mordaunt reflected an instant, and after evident hesitation, he was just opening his mouth to speak, when Bernouin entered hastily, leant down to the cardinal's ear, and said, in a low voice—

"Your excellence, Queen Henrietta, accompanied by an English gentleman, is this moment entering the Palais Royal."

Mazarin gave a start in his chair, which did not escape the young man's notice, and doubtless checked the confidence he was about to repose.

"Sir," said the cardinal, "you understood me, did you not? I appoint Boulogne, because I imagine that every French town is perfectly indifferent to you. Should you prefer another, only name it;

but you can easily conceive, that, surrounded as I am by influences which I can only escape by the exercise of great discretion, I must be anxious that your presence in Paris should not be known."

"I will depart, sir," said Mordaunt, making some steps towards the door by which he had entered.

"Not that way, sir, I beseech you," said the cardinal, with great eagerness. "Will you pass through the gallery, from which you can gain the hall? I am anxious that you should not be seen leaving me: our interview ought to be strictly secret."

Mordaunt followed Bernouin, who led him into an adjoining room, and delivered him over to an usher, indicating the door by which he was to go out.

Then he hastily returned to his master, to introduce the Queen Henrietta, who was already passing through the window gallery.

CHAPTER XLI.

MAZARIN AND THE QUEEN HENRIETTA.

The cardinal arose, and went hastily to receive the queen of England. He met her in the middle of the gallery which led to his cabinet. He paid the more respect to this queen, unattended and unadorned, because he felt that he had something wherewith to reproach himself on the score of his avarice and want of feeling.

But suppliants learn to school their countenances to assume every kind of expression; and the daughter of Henry IV. smiled on meeting him whom she despised and hated.

"Ah!" said Mazarin to himself, "what a mighty soft expression of countenance! Can she be come to borrow money from me?"

And he cast an anxious glance at the lock of his strong-box; he even turned the stone of the magnificent diamond, the brilliancy of which attracted the eye to his hand, which, however, was handsome and white. Unfortunately this ring had not the property of that of

Gyges, which rendered its master invisible, when he did what Mazarin had just done.

Now Mazarin would have much liked to be invisible at that moment: he guessed that Henrietta was come to ask something from him; for, when a queen whom he had treated in this manner appeared with a smile on her lips, instead of a frown on her brow, it was clear that she came as a suppliant.

"M. le Cardinal," said the august visitor, "I had at first thought of speaking to my sister the queen on the affair which brings me here, but I reflected, that politics are always better discussed by men."

"Madame," said Mazarin, "believe me that your majesty overwhelms me by your flattering distinction."

"He is mighty gracious," thought the queen: "has he guessed the cause of my visit?"

They had reached the cardinal's cabinet. He seated the queen; and when she was comfortably settled in his own easy-chair—"Give your orders," said he, "to the most respectful of your servants."

"Alas, sir," replied the queen, "I have lost the habit of giving orders, and taken up that of making requests. I come to entreat you, too happy should my entreaty be complied with."

"I am all attention, madame," said Mazarin.

"M. le Cardinal, the subject on which I wish to speak, is, the war which my husband is now waging against his rebellious people. You are perhaps ignorant that they are fighting in England," said the queen, with a melancholy smile, "and that in a short time there will be a more decisive battle than has yet been fought?"

"I am completely ignorant of it," said the cardinal, accompanying these words with a slight movement of the shoulders. "Alas! our own wars engage all the time and talent of such a poor, incapable, and weak minister as I am."

"Well, M. le Cardinal," continued the queen, "I will inform you, then, that Charles I., my husband, is on the eve of fighting a decisive battle. In case of a defeat [here Mazarin made a movement] it is necessary to provide for everything—in case of defeat, he wishes to retire to France, and to live as a private gentleman. What do you say to this plan?"

The cardinal had listened without a muscle of his countenance betraying any emotion. Whilst listening, his smile remained, as before, false and cunning; and when the queen had finished—

"Do you think, madame," said he, in his softest tone, "that France, agitated, and indeed convulsed as she is, woul be the safest asylum for a dethroned monarch? The crown is already tottering on the brow of Louis XIV.; how could he support the double weight?"

"That weight has not been very heavy as regards me," interrupted the queen, with a mournful smile; "and I do not ask you to do more for my husband than you have done for me. You may perceive that we are very modest sovereigns, sir."

"Oh, *you*, madame, you"—the cardinal hastened to say, to cut short the disclosures which he saw coming out—"as to you, it is quite another thing. A daughter of Henry IV.—a daughter of that sublime king——"

"Which does not prevent your refusing hospitality to his son-in-law—is it not so, sir?" You ought, however, to remember, that this great, this sublime king, once proscribed, as my husband is going to be, sent to demand succour from England, which England herself accorded. It is true that Queen Elizabeth was not his niece."

"*Peccato!*" said Mazarin, wincing under this simple logic: "your majesty does not comprehend me: you misinterpret my meaning, no doubt because I do not express myself well in French."

"Speak Italian, sir. The Queen Mary de Medicis, our mother, taught us that language, before the cardinal, your predecessor, sent her to die in exile. If there were now any remnant of that great, of that sublime King Henry, of whom you were just now speaking, he would be much astonished at that profound admiration, united with so little pity for his family."

The perspiration stood in large drops on the cardinal's forehead.

"This admiration is, on the contrary, so great and genuine, madame," said Mazarin, without, however, availing himself of the

offer of changing his language, "that if King Charles I., whom may God preserve from any misfortune, should come to France, I would offer him my house—my own house; but, alas! it would be but an insecure retreat. Some day, the people will burn my house, as they did that of Marshal d'Ancre. Poor Concino Concini! and yet he only thought of the welfare of France."

"Yes, your excellence, like yourself," said the queen, ironically.

Mazarin pretended not to understand the double meaning of the sentence he had himself uttered, and continued to lament over the lot of Concino Concini.

"But after all, my lord cardinal," said the queen, quite out of patience, "what answer do you give me?"

"Madame," exclaimed the cardinal, more and more affected, "madame, your majesty must permit me to give you a piece of advice, at the same time bearing in mind, before I venture on such audacity, that I throw myself at your feet, as the humblest and most devoted of your servants for all your commands."

"Speak, sir," said the queen: "the advice of such a prudent man as yourself must always be valuable."

"Madame, believe me, the king ought to defend himself to the last extremity."

"He has done so, sir; and this last battle, which he is about to fight, with resources far inferior to those of his enemies, proves that he does not yield without a struggle. But should he, after all, be vanquished?"

"Well, then, madame, in that case, my advice—I know that I am very bold to give advice to your majesty—but my advice is, that the king should not leave his realm. Absent kings are soon forgotten. If he should come to France, his cause his lost."

"But then," said the queen, "if that be your advice, and you are really interested for him, send him some assistance in men and money; for I can do no more for him: I have sold even my last diamond to aid him. I have actually nothitg left: you know it yourself; you know it better than any one else, sir. If any ornament had been left, I should have bought fuel to warm myself and my daughter this winter."

"Ah, madame," said Mazarin, "your majesty is not aware of what you request. From the very day when foreign aid is given to a king, to replace him on his throne, he confesses that he no longer depends upon the love of his subjects."

"To the point, my lord cardinal," said the queen, wearied at following that subtle mind into the labyrinth of words in which he lost himself: "to the point; and say yes or no. If the king persists in remaining in England, will you send him any assistance? Should he come to France, will you grant him hospitality?"

"Madame," answered the cardinal, affecting the greatest frankness, "I will prove to your majesty, I hope, how completely I am devoted to you, and what a great desire I have to terminate an affair which your majesty takes so much to heart; after which, I hope that your majesty will no longer doubt my zeal in your service."

The queen bit her lips, and moved impatiently on her chair. "Well, then, what will you do?" said she: "come, let us see.'

"I will instantly go and consult the queen on this question, and we will then lay the matter before the parliament."

"With which you are now at variance, are you not? You will depute Broussel to bring it forward. That is quite enough, my lord cardinal, quite sufficient. I understand you; or, rather, I am wrong. Go to the parliament—for it is from that parliament, the enemy of kings, that the only relief, which prevented her dying of cold and hunger this winter, has come to the daughter of that great, that sublime Henry, you so much admire." And with these words the queen rose from her seat with majestic indignation.

The cardinal held out his clasped hands to her. "Ah, madame, how ill you understand me!'

But Queen Henrietta, without even turning towards him who was there shedding hypocritical tears, traversed the cabinet, opened the door herself, and, in the midst of his eminence's numerous guards, and of courtiers eager to pay their respects to him, and of luxury rivalling royalty itself, went and took the arm of Lord de Winter, who was standing alone and unnoticed. Poor queen! already fallen from her high estate, to whom all yet bowed from etiquette, but who had, in fact, only one arm on which she could lean.

"Never mind," said Mazarin, when he was left alone: "this has given me great pain: it is but a rough character to play; but I have said nothing, either to the one party or the other. Hum! that Cromwell is but an uncouth king-hunter. I pity his ministers, if he should ever have any.—Bernouin!"

Bernouin entered.

"Inquire if that young man whom you introduced, in a dark-coloured doublet, and with short hair, is yet in the palace."

Bernouin left the room. The cardinal occupied the time of his absence in turning outward the bezil of his ring, in rubbing the diamond, and in admiring its water; and, as a tear was swimming in his eye, and dimmed his vision, he shook his head to get rid of it.

Bernouin returned with Comminges, who was on guard.

"Your excellence," said Comminges, "as I was conducting the young man your eminence inquires for, he went up to the glass door of the gallery, and looked at something with great astonishment; without doubt, it was Raphael's beautiful picture, which is opposite that door. Afterwards, he appeared to meditate a moment, and then descended the staircase. I fancy that I saw him mount a gray horse, and leave the courtyard of the palace. But is not your eminence going to the queen?"

"For what?"

"M. Guitaut, my uncle, has just informed me that her majesty has received news from the army."

"Very well; I will go directly."

At this moment M. Villequier appeared: he came, indeed, from the queen, in search of the cardinal.

Comminges was right: Mordaunt had really acted as he said. In passing through the gallery parallel to the *windowed* gallery, he had perceived de Winter, who was waiting for the queen.

At this sight the young man stopped short, not in admiration of Raphael's picture, but as if fascinated by the appearance of a horrible object. His eyes dilated, and a shudder ran through his whole body: one would have said that he wished to demolish the barrier of glass that separated him from his enemy; for if Com-

minges had seen the expression of hatred that shone in his eyes on looking at de Winter, he would not have doubted, for an instant, that this English gentleman was his mortal enemy.

But Mordaunt restrained himself, in order to gain time for reflection; and, instead of allowing himself to be carried away by the first impulse, which had urged him to go directly to Lord de Winter, he slowly descended the staircase, left the palace with head depressed, placed himself in the saddle, stationed his horse at the corner of the rue Richelieu, and, with his eyes fixed on the gate, waited till the queen's carriage should issue from the courtyard. He had not long to wait; for the queen remained scarcely a quarter of an hour with Mazarin; but this quarter of an hour appeared an age to him who waited. At last the heavy machine, which was then called a coach, rumbled through the gates; and de Winter, again on horseback, leant forward towards the door, to converse with the queen.

The horses set off at a trot, and took the way to the Louvre, which they entered. Before she left the Carmelite convent, Queen Henrietta had told her daughter to wait for her at the palace, which she had long inhabited, and which she had only left because her misery appeared even more oppressive in gilded saloons.

Mordaunt followed the carriage; and when he saw it enter the gloomy arch, he stationed himself against a shaded wall, and remained motionless in the midst of the mouldings of Jean Goujon, like a bas-relief representing an equestrian statue. Here again he waited, as he had before done at the Palais Royal.

CHAPTER XLII.

HOW THE UNFORTUNATE SOMETIMES TAKE CHANCE FOR PROVIDENCE.

"Well, madame?" said Lord de Winter, when the queen had dismissed her attendants.

"Well, what I foresaw has happened, my lord."

"And he refuses?"

"Did I not tell you so, before we went?"

"The cardinal refuses to receive the king? France refuses hospitality to an unfortunate prince? But it is the first time such a thing has happened, madame."

"I did not say France, my lord—I said the cardinal; and the cardinal is not even a Frenchman."

"But did you see the queen?"

"It is perfectly useless," replied Henrietta, with a melancholy shake of the head: "the queen will never say yes, when the cardinal has said no. Do you not know that this Italian manages everything, internally as well as externally? And more than that, and returning to what I said to you before, I should not be surprised if we had been anticipated by Cromwell. He was much embarrassed when he spoke to me, and firm in his determination of refusal. Then, did you observe the commotion there was in the Palais Royal, the constant running about of men deeply engaged? Can they have received any news, my lord?"

"It is not from England, madame. I used so much despatch that I am sure I was not anticipated. I only left three days ago: I passed through the army of the Puritans, as if by a miracle; I took post with my lacquey, Tony; and the horses which we now ride, I bought at Paris. Besides, before he risks anything, I am certain that the king will wait for your answer."

"You will tell him, my lord," replied the queen, in a tone of despair, "that I am now utterly powerless; that I have suffered as much, nay more, than he has, constrained as I am to eat the bread of an exile, and to demand hospitality from false friends, who deride my tears; and that, as to his own royal person, it behoves him to sacrifice it generously, and to die like a king. I will go and die with him."

"Madame," said de Winter, "your majesty abandons yourself to despondency, and perhaps some hope may be left."

"No more friends, no more friends in the world, my lord, than yourself. Oh, my God!" exclaimed Henrietta, raising her hands to heaven, "hast thou removed from the earth all the generous hearts which once existed?"

"I hope not, madame," said de Winter: "I spoke to you of four men."

"And what can you do with four men?"

"Four devoted men, four men resolved to die, can do a great deal, believe me, madame; and those of whom I spoke, did a great deal once."

"And where are these four men?"

"Ah! that is what I am anxious to know. For nearly twenty years I have lost sight of them; and yet, whenever I have seen the king in danger, I have thought of them."

"Were these men, then, your friends?"

"One of these men had my life in his power, and gave it me. I do not know whether he has remained my friend; but at any rate, since that time I have remained his."

"And are these men in France, my lord?"

"I believe so."

"Tell me their names: perhaps I may have heard them mentioned, and may assist you in your inquiry."

"One of them was called the Chevalier d'Artagnan."

"Oh, my lord, if I am not mistaken, this Chevalier d'Artagnan is now a lieutenant in the guards, I have heard his name mentioned; but observe, that this man is, I fear, a devoted cardinalist."

"In that case it would be a great misfortune," said de Winter, "and I begin to think that fate is against us."

"But the others," said the queen, who clung to this last hope as a shipwrecked mariner does to the last remnants of his vessel—"the others, my lord!"

"The name of the second, I heard by chance—for, before fighting us, these four gentlemen gave us their names—the second was called the Count de la Fère. As for the two others, the custom that I fell into, of calling them by their borrowed names, made me forget their real ones."

"It is, however, of great consequence to find them," said the queen, "since you imagine that these excellent men might be of great service to the king."

"Oh, yes," said de Winter. "Did your majesty never hear

that Anne of Austria was formerly saved from perhaps the greatest danger that a queen ever encountered."

"Yes, at the period of her amours with the Duke of Buckingham, and about some diamond studs."

"Yes, madame, that is it; and these are the men who saved her. It grieves me to think, that, if the names of these gentlemen are not known, it is because the queen has forgotten them, when she ought to have made them the first gentlemen in her realm."

"Well, my lord, we must look for them. But what can four men do, or rather three; for I tell you that you must not reckon on M. d'Artagnan."

"He will be one valiant sword the less, madame; but there will still be three others, without reckoning mine. Now, four devoted men, surrounding the king, to guard him from his enemies, to encircle him in battle, to aid him with their counsel, to escort him in his flight, would be sufficient, not to render him victorious, but to save him if vanquished, to aid him in traversing the ocean; and, whatever Mazarin may say, once on the shores of France, and your royal husband will there find as many retreats and asylums, as the sea-bird in a storm."

"Look, therefore, for these gentlemen, my lord; and should you find them, should they consent to pass over into England with you, on the day that we remount the throne I will give to each of them a duchy, and, besides that, as much gold as would pave the palace of Whitehall. Look for them therefore, my lord, I beseech you!"

"I will, madame," replied de Winter, "and I could certainly find them, were not my time so short. Does your majesty forget that the king expects his answer, and is waiting with extreme anxiety."

"Then we are lost!" exclaimed the queen, in a tone of deep anguish.

At this moment the door opened, the young Henrietta appeared, and the queen, with that sublime power over herself, which constitutes maternal heroism, restrained her tears, at the same time making a sign to de Winter to change the conversation.

But she could not deceive the young princess, who stopped on the threshold, heaved a sigh, and addressing the queen, "Why do you always weep without me, my mother?" said she.

The queen smiled, and, instead of answering her—"There, de Winter," said she; "I have at any rate gained one thing by being only half a queen, which is, that my children call me mother, instead of madame."

Then turning towards her daughter: "What do you want, Henrietta?" she continued.

"My mother," said the young princess, "a cavalier has just entered the Louvre, and requests the liberty of paying his respects to you. He is just come from the army, and says that he has a letter for you, from Marshal Grammont, I believe."

"Ah!" said the queen to de Winter, "he is one of my faithful friends. But do you not observe, my dear lord, that we are so badly served, that my daughter is compelled to perform the office of an usher."

"Madame," said de Winter, "have pity on me, for you break my heart."

"And who is this cavalier, Henrietta?" said the queen.

"I saw him from the window, madame: he is a young man, who appears to be scarcely sixteen years old, and is called the Viscount de Bragelonne."

The queen gave a nod, the princess opened the door, and Raoul made his appearance. He stepped forward to the queen, and knelt down.

"Madame," said he, "I am the bearer of a letter from my friend, the Count de Guiche, who tells me that he has the honour to be one of your servants. This letter contains important news, and the expression of his own devotion to you."

On hearing the name of the Count de Guiche, a colour spread over the young princess's cheeks, and the queen looked at her with some severity.

"You informed me that the letter was from Marshal Grammont, Henrietta," said the queen.

"I thought so," stammered out the young girl.

"It is my fault, madame," interposed Raoul: "in fact, I announced myself as having come from Marshal Grammont; but he cannot write, being wounded in the right arm, and the Count de Guiche acted as his secretary."

"Then there has been a battle?" said the queen, making a sign to Raoul to rise,

"Yes, madame," replied the young man, delivering the letter to Lord de Winter, who came forward to receive it, to hand it to the queen.

At this declaration that a battle had been fought, the young princess opened her lips, to ask a question which no doubt much interested her, but she closed them without uttering a word, whilst the roses gradually vanished from her cheeks.

The queen observed all these emotions, and, doubtless, her maternal heart interpreted them correctly; for, again addressing Raoul:

"I hope that the Count de Guiche has escaped unhurt," said she; "for not only is he one of our followers, as he has told you, but one of our friends."

"Madame," replied Raoul, "not only has he escaped uninjured, but he has acquired great glory, and has had the honour of being embraced by the prince on the field of battle."

The young princess clapped her hands; but quite ashamed of being betrayed by her feelings into such a demonstration of joy, she turned and leant down to a vase of roses, pretending to smell them.

"Let us see what the count says," said the queen.

"I have had the honour of telling your majesty, that he wrote in his father's name."

"Yes, sir."

The queen unsealed the letter, and read:—

"Madame and Queen,

"Being unable to have the honour of writing to you myself, on account of a wound in my right hand, I avail myself of the services of my son, the Count de Guiche, (whom you know to be as true a servant to your majesty as his father,) to inform you that we have just gained the battle of Lens, and that this victory cannot

fail greatly to increase the power of the cardinal and the queen in the affairs of Europe. Therefore, if your majesty will follow my advice, you will take advantage of this moment, to lay the claims of your august husband to favour before the king's government. M. the Viscount de Bragelonne, who will have the honour to deliver this letter, is my son's friend, to whom, indeed, he in all probability is indebted for his life. He is a gentleman in whom your majesty may entirely confide, should you have any verbal or written message to send to me. I have the honour to be, with respect, &c.

"MARSHAL DE GRAMMONT."

At the moment that the service he had rendered the count was mentioned, Raoul had not been able to help turning his head towards the princess, and he had then seen an expression of gratitude towards him beaming from her eyes. He had no longer any doubt: the daughter of Charles I. loved his friend.

"The battle of Lens gained?" said the queen. "They are very fortunate here: they gain battles. Yes, Marshal Grammont is right: that will change the aspect of affairs; but I much fear that it will do nothing for ours, if, indeed, it does not injure them. This news is very recent, sir," continued the queen, "and I am greatly obliged by your having used such despatch in conveying it to me. Without you, without this letter, I should not have heard it until to-morrow, or perhaps the day after to-morrow—in fact, probably the last person in Paris."

"Madame," said Raoul, "the Louvre is the second palace which has yet received this intelligence: it is unknown elsewhere; and I swore to M. de Guiche that I would deliver this letter, even before I had embraced my guardian."

"And is your guardian a Bragelonne, like yourself?" demanded Lord de Winter. "I formerly knew a Bragelonne: does he still live?"

"No, sir, he is dead, and it is from him that my guardian, with whom he was closely connected, I believe, inherited that property of which I bear the title."

"And your guardian, sir," said the queen, who could not help feeling an interest in this handsome youth—"what is his name?"

"M. le Count de la Fère, madame," replied the young man, bowing.

De Winter made a movement of surprise, whilst the queen looked at him, radiant with joy.

"The Count de la Fère!" she exclaimed: "is not that the name you mentioned to me?"

As for de Winter, he could scarcely believe what he had heard.—"The Count de la Fère!" he exclaimed in turn: "oh, sir, answer me, I beseech you: is not the Count de la Fère a nobleman whom I knew, handsome and brave, who was one of the musketeers of Louis XIII., and who may now be forty-seven or forty-eight years of age?"

"Yes, sir, you are perfectly right."

"And who served under a feigned name?"

"Under the name of Athos. Indeed it is lately that I first heard his friend, M. d'Artagnan, give him that name."

"That is it, madame—that is it—God be praised! And is he in Paris?" continued the baron, addressing Raoul. Then turning again to the queen—"Again you may indulge some hope, madame," said he: "Providence declares for us, since she enables me to find this brave gentleman in such a miraculous manner. And where is he now, sir, I beseech you?"

"The Count de la Fère is at present residing at the hotel du *Grand Roi Charlemagne*, in the rue Guénégaud."

"Thank you, sir. Request this excellent friend to remain at home: I will come very shortly to embrace him."

"Sir, I will obey you with the greatest pleasure, if her majesty will give me permission to depart."

'Go, viscount," said the queen, "and be assured of our affection for you."

Raoul bowed respectfully to the two princesses, saluted de Winter, and left the room.

De Winter and the queen continued their conversation in a low voice for sometime, that the young princess might not hear them; but this precaution was unnecessary, for she was employing herself with her own thoughts.

Then, just as de Winter was about to take leave—"Wait, my lord," said the queen. "I had kept this diamond cross, which I received from my mother, and this crown of St. Michael, which my husband gave me—they are worth about fifty thousand livres—and I had sworn to die of hunger rather than part with these precious pledges. But now that these ornaments may prove useful to him or to his defenders, all must be sacrificed to that hope. Take them, then, and should you want money for your expedition, sell them without hesitation, my lord—sell them. But if you find the means of preserving them, remember, my lord, that I shall consider you to have rendered me the greatest service that a gentleman can pay to a queen, and that, in the day of my prosperity, he who shall bring me back this crown and this cross will be blessed by me and my children."

"Madame," said de Winter, "your majesty shall be served by a most devoted follower. I will deposit in a most secure place these two jewels, which, indeed, I would not have accepted had not my own resources been utterly exhausted. But my property is confiscated, and I have disposed of everything I possess. In an hour I will visit the Count de la Fère, and to-morrow you shall have a decisive answer."

The queen gave her hand to Lord de Winter, who kissed it respectfully, and turning towards her daughter, "My lord," said she, "you were charged to deliver something to this child from her father."

De Winter was astonished: he did not understand the queen's meaning; but the young Henrietta came forward, blushing, and presented her forehead to his lordship.

"Tell my father," said the young princess, "that whether king or fugitive, victor or vanquished, powerful or poor, he has in me a daughter most obedient and affectionate."

"I know it, madame, said de Winter, touching Henrietta's forehead with his lips.

He then departed, traversing, unattended and unconducted, those vast, deserted, and dark chambers, and wiping away the tears

which, all sered as was his heart by fifty years of a courtier's life, he could not refrain from shedding at the sight of this regal adversity, so dignified, and at the same time so severe.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE UNCLE AND THE NEPHEW.

Lord de Winter's horse and lacquey were waiting for him at the gate. He therefore went towards his hotel absorbed in thought, and occasionally looking back at the dark and silent front of the Louvre. He then saw a horseman detach himself, as it were, from the wall, and follow him at some distance; and he remembered having observed a similar figure on leaving the Palais Royal.

Lord de Winter's lacquey, who was following him at the distance of a few paces, had also remarked this horseman with some inquietude.

"Tony," said Lord de Winter, making a sign for his valet to join him.

"Here I am, you excellence;" and the lacquey rode up to his master's side.

"Have you observed the man who is following us?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Who is he?"

"I have not the slightest idea; only he has followed your lordship from the Palais Royal, waited at the Louvre until you came out, and left that place with you."

"Some spy of the cardinal's," said de Winter to himself: "let us pretend not to observe that he is watching us."

And spurring forward, he plunged into that Dædalus of streets that conducted him to his hotel, situated on the side of the Marais; for having formerly resided in the Place Royale, Lord de Winter had naturally taken up his abode near his ancient habitation.

The stranger followed him, also at a gallop.

De Winter dismounted at his hotel, and went up to his room, resolved to have the spy watched; but as he was laying his hat and gloves on a table, he saw, in a mirror which was opposite to him, the reflection of a man who was entering the doorway. He turned, and Mordaunt stood before him.

De Winter became pale, and remained motionless. As for Mordaunt, he stood at the door, cold, threatening, and like the statue of a knight-commander. There was a moment of freezing silence between these two men.

"Sir," said de Winter, "I thought that I had made you comprehend that your persecution wearied me: retire, therefore, or I will take means to expel you from the house, as I did in London. I am not your uncle—I do not know you!"

"My uncle!" replied Mordaunt with his harsh and mocking voice, "you deceive yourself: you will not drive me away, as you did in London—you dare not. As for denying that I am your nephew, you will think twice of it, now that I have learnt many things of which I was ignorant a year ago."

"And what does it signify to me what you have learnt?" said de Winter."

"Oh, it signifies a great deal to you, *my uncle*, I am sure; and you will soon be of my opinion," he added, with a smile that caused a shudder to run through the veins of him he addressed. "When I came to your house in London, the first time, it was to ask you what had become of my property; when I came the second time, it was to ask you what had contaminated my name. But this time, I present myself before you to put a question to you, far different, and far more dreadful than the others—to say to you, as God said to the first murderer: 'Cain, what hast thou done with thy brother Abel?' My lord, what hast thou done with thy sister—with thy sister, who was my mother?"

De Winter recoiled under the fire of those flaming eyes. "With thy mother?" said he.

"Yes, with my mother, my lord," replied the young man, moving his head up and down.

De Winter exerted a powerful effort over his feelings, and plung-

ing into the depths of his recollections to find a sufficient expression of his hatred, he exclaimed, "If you would know what has become of her, seek your information from hell, for hell alone can answer you."

The young man then advanced into the chamber, until he stood face to face with Lord de Winter. Then, folding his arms—"I have questioned the executioner of Bethune," said he, in a hollow voice, and with a countenance livid with anguish and rage; "and the executioner of Bethune has given me an answer."

De Winter fell on a chair as if struck by lightning, and in vain attempted to reply.

"Yes, is it not so?" continued the young man: "that word explains everything—with that key the abyss is opened. My mother inherited from her husband, and you murdered my mother—my name insured me my paternal property, and you robbed me of my name! I am not now surprised that you disowned me, or that you persist in disowning me: it would be unseemly to call him your nephew, whom you have despoiled and impoverished—the man you have made an orphan by murdering his mother!"

These words produced the very opposite effect to that which Mordaunt had expected. De Winter, recalling to his recollection what a monster her ladyship was, rose up, grave and calm, and subduing the fiery look of the young man by his severe aspect—

"So, you wish to penetrate this horrible secret, sir?" said he. "Well, then, be it so. Learn now what this woman was, for whom you this day come to call me to a reckoning. This woman had, in all human probability, poisoned my brother, and, to enjoy my inheritance, she endeavoured afterwards to murder me. I have proof of it. What do you say to that?"

"I say that she was my mother!"

"She caused the unfortunate Duke of Buckingham to be stabbed, by a man who, until then, was just, good, and pure. What do you say to that crime, of which I have also proof?"

"That she was my mother!"

"Having returned to France, she poisoned a young female, beloved by one of her enemies, in a Carmelite convent at Bethune.

Will this crime convince you of the justice of her punishment? for of this crime I also possess the proof."

"She was my mother!" exclaimed the young man, who had uttered these exclamations with progressively increasing vehemence.

"In fine, cumbered with murders and debauchery, execrated by all, still threatening, like a tigress craving for blood, she fell under the blows of men whom she had driven to desperation, and who had never injured her—she found judges, whom her detestable outrages had evoked. And, this executioner whom you met, and who you pretend told you everything—if he did tell you everything, he must have informed you that he actually leaped for joy at avenging upon her the disgrace and suicide of his brother. An abandoned maiden, an adulterous spouse, an unnatural sister, a poisoning homicide, detested by every one who knew, by every nation that had received her into its bosom, she died, accursed of God and man! There, that is the woman you call your mother!"

A sob, too powerful to be restrained, almost lacerated Mordaunt's throat, and drove the blood back to his livid countenance. Clenching his fists, his face streaming with perspiration, his hair bristling on his forehead like that of Hamlet, he cried out, in a paroxysm of fury—

"Silence, sir! she was my mother! As for her frailties, I knew them not—as for her vices, I knew them not—as for her crimes, I knew them not! But what I do know is, that I had a mother—that five men, leagued against one woman, slew her secretly, darkly, and silently, cowards as they were! What I also know is, that you were there, sir—that you were amongst them, my uncle! and that you cried out, as the others did, and even louder than the others: *she must die!* Therefore I forewarn you—and mark well my words, and let them be so deeply engraven on your memory, that they may never be forgotten—this murder, which has torn everything from me—this murder, which has made me nameless—this murder, which has impoverished me—for this murder, which has made me corrupt, wicked, and implacable, I shall first call you to a reckoning, and

afterwards, when I have discovered them, those who were your accomplices!"

With deadly hatred in his eyes, his mouth foaming with rage, and his clenched fist extended, Mordaunt had made a step towards de Winter, with a mien so terrible and threatening, that his lordship put his hand to his sword, and said, with the smile of a man who had sported with death for thirty years—

"Would you assassinate me, sir? In that I do recognise you as my nephew,—as the true son of your mother!"

"No," replied Mordaunt, compelling all the features of his countenance, and all the muscles of his body, to soften down and resume their places—"no, I will not kill you—at any rate not at this time; for, without you, I shall not be able to discover the others. But, when I know them, then, sir, tremble. I stabbed the executioner of Bethune—I stabbed him without pity or commiseration—and he was the least guilty of you all!"

And with these words the young man left the room, and went down the staircase with sufficient calmness to avoid observation. On the lower landing-place, he passed Tony, who was leaning against the balustrade, and only waiting for a call from his master to go up to him.

But de Winter did not call. Overwhelmed and fainting, he remained intently listening. Then, only, when he heard the retreating steps of Mordaunt's horse, he fell back upon a chair, exclaiming—"My God! I thank thee that I am the only one he knows!"

CHAPTER XLIV.

PATERNITY.

Whilst this dreadful scene was passing at Lord de Winter's, Athos, seated by the window of his apartment, with his elbow resting upon a table, and his head supported on his hand, was

listening, with every faculty of hearing and seeing on the stretch, to the account which Raoul was giving him of his adventures on his journey, and the particulars of the battle.

The handsome and noble countenance of this gentleman was beming with indescribable happiness at the recital of his first impressions, so fresh and pure: he inhaled the sounds of that youthful voice (which already warmed at noble sentiments) as he would have done a piece of melody. He had entirely forgotten all that was gloomy in the past, or cloudy in the future. It might almost be said that the return of this much-loved boy had converted all his fears into hopes. Athos was happy, more happy than he had ever been before.

"And you assisted, and took a share in this great battle, Bragelonne?" said the old musketeer.

"Yes, sir."

"And it was a rough one, you say?"

"The prince charged in person eleven times."

"He is a great warrior, Bragelonne?"

"He is a hero, sir! I did not lose sight of him for one instant. Oh! what an honour it is, sir, to be called Condé, and thus to uphold his name."

"Calm and brilliant, is he not?"

"Calm as if on parade; brilliant as if at a fête. When we attacked the enemy, it was at a slow march. We were forbidden to fire first; and we advanced on the Spaniards, who held possession of a height, with their muskets at their thigh; and when we had got within thirty paces of them, the prince turned towards the soldiers—

"'My children,' said he, 'you have to sustain a furious discharge; but, after that, be quite easy—you will make short work with these gentry.'

"There was such a dead silence, that both friends and enemies heard these words. Then raising his sword—'Sound the trumpets,' said he."

"Well, well; on a similar occasion you would do the same, Raoul, would you not?"

"I much doubt it, sir; for I found this very splendid, and very grand. When we came within twenty paces of them, we saw all

those muskets level themselves like a brilliant line, for the sun was shining on their barrels."

"'Slow march, my children, slow march,' said the prince: 'now is the time.'"

"And were you afraid, Raoul?" inquired the count.

"Yes, sir," replied the youth, with great simplicity; "I felt what resembled a sudden chill at my heart, and at the word 'fire!' which resounded along their ranks, in the Spanish language, I shut my eyes, and thought of you."

"Really, Raoul?" said Athos, pressing his hand.

"Yes, sir; and at that moment there was such a report, that one would have supposed hell itself had opened, and that those who were not killed, actually felt the heat of the fire. I opened mp eyes, astonished at not being dead, or at any rate wounded. A third part of the squadron was stretched on the ground, mutilated and bleeding. At this moment I met the prince's eye: I then only thought of one thing, which was, that he was looking at me. I spurred forward, and found myself in the midst of the enemy's ranks."

"And the prince was satisfied with you?"

"He at least told me so, sir, when he ordered me to accompany M. de Chatillon to Paris, who is the bearer of the news to the queen, and also of the captured standards."

"'Go,' said the prince to me. 'The enemy cannot rally in less than a fortnight; and until that time I shall not require you. Go, and embrace those you love, and who love you; and tell my sister de Longueville, that I thank her for the present she made me, when she gave me yourself.'

"And I am come, sir," added Raoul, looking at the count with a smile of deep affection: "for I thought that you would be very glad to see me."

Athos drew the youth towards him, and saluted him on the forehead as if he had been a young girl.

"So now, Raoul," said he, "you are launched on the ocean of the world. You have dukes for friends, a marshal of France for your godfather, a prince of the blood for your captain, and, in one

and the same day of your return, you have been received by two queens. This is a fine thing for a first outset in life."

"Ah, sir," said Raoul suddenly, "you recal one thing, which, in my eagerness to tell you my exploits, I had forgotten: it is, that, at the queen of England's, there was a gentleman, who, when I mentioned your name, uttered an exclamation of surprise and joy, declared himself one of your friends, asked me for your address, and is soon coming to visit you."

"What is his name?"

"I did not presume to ask him, sir; but, although he expresses himself with elegance, I imagine, from his accent, that he is an Englishman."

"Ah!" said Athos; and he held down his head, as if to recal some recollection. When he again raised it, his eyes were attracted by the appearance of a man, standing in the half-opened doorway, who was looking at him with some emotion. "Lord de Winter!" exclaimed the count.

"Athos, my friend!"

And the two gentlemen embraced. Then Athos, taking both his hands, said, whilst he looked at him—

"What is the matter with you, my lord? You appear as sad, as I am joyful."

"Yes, my dear friend, it is true; and I will even say, that the sight of you redoubles my fears."

And de Winter looked around, as if anxious for a more private interview. Raoul comprehended that the two friends wished to be alone, and left the room without affectation or apology.

"Come, now that we are alone, let us talk of your affairs," said Athos.

"Yes, whilst we are alone, let us talk of our affairs," replied Lord de Winter.—"*He* is here!"

"Who?"

"Her ladyship's son!"

Athos, once more struck by that name which, seemed to follow him like a fatal echo, again hesitated a moment, then frowned slightly, and, in his calm tone, said, "I know it."

"You know it?"

"Yes; Grimaud met with him between Bethune and Arras, and returned at speed to warn me of his presence."

"Grimaud, then, knew him?"

"No; but he assisted at the deathbed of a man who knew him."

"The executioner of Bethune," exclaimed Lord de Winter.

"Do you know that?" said Athos, in astonishment.

"He has but just this moment left me," replied de Winter; he told me everything. Ah, my friend, what a dreadful scene! Why did we not crush the child with the mother!"

Athos, like all noble natures, did not impart to others the painful impressions he felt; on the contrary, he, as it were, absorbed them all himself, and, in their stead, sent back hope and consolation. It might be said, that his own personal sorrows issued from his soul, transmuted into joys and happiness for others.

"What do you fear?" said he, recovering, by reasoning with himself, from the instinctive terror he had first experienced. "Are we not able to defend ourselves? Has this young man made himself a professional assassin—a cold-blooded murderer? He has killed the executioner of Bethune in an excess of rage, and his fury must be now satiated."

De Winter smiled sadly, and shook his head. "Do you, then, forget his origin?" said he.

"Bah!" cried Athos, endeavouring to smile in his turn; "it must have lost its ferocity in the second generation. Besides, my friend, we are forewarned, so as to be able to put ourselves on our guard. We can do nothing but wait: therefore, let us wait. But, as I said before, tell me something about yourself. What brings you to Paris?"

"Some important affairs, which you will know hereafter. But what have I heard from the queen of England—that M. d'Artagnan is for Mazarin? Pardon my frankness, my friend. I neither hate nor blame the cardinal, and your opinion will always be sacred to me. Are *you* also devoted to that man?"

"M. d'Artagnan is in the service," replied Athos. "He is a soldier, and he obeys the constituted authority. M. d'Artagnan is not

rich, and is obliged to live on his pay as a lieutenant. Wealthy men, like yourself, my lord, are very rare in France."

"Alas!" said de Winter, "I am now as poor, nay even poorer than he is. But let us return to yourself."

"Well, then, you wish to know whether I support Mazarin? No—a thousand times, no! Pardon me also for my frankness, my lord."

De Winter arose, and embraced Athos.

"Thanks, count," said he, "thanks for this happy news. You now see me happy and reinvigorated. Ah! you are no cardinalist: so much the better. Besides, it could not be. But pardon me again—are you free?"

"What do you mean by free?"

"I ask whether you are not married?"

"Ah! as to that, no," replied Athos, smiling.

"I mean this young man, so handsome, so elegant, so graceful—"

"He is a boy I am bringing up, and who does not know his father."

"Very well: you are still the same Athos, noble and generous."

"Come, my lord, what do you require of me?"

"You have still Porthos and Aramis for your friends?"

"And add d'Artagnan, my lord. We are still four friends, as much devoted to each other as formerly. But when the question is, to serve or to oppose the cardinal—to be cardinalists or frondeurs—we are but two."

"Is M. Aramis with d'Artagnan?" demanded the baron.

"No," replied Athos; "M. Aramis does me the honour to participate in my convictions."

"Can you put me into communication with that charming and talented friend?"

"Undoubtedly, whenever you please."

"Is he at all changed?"

"He has become an abbé—that is all."

"You alarm me: his position must therefore have induced him to renounce all important enterprises."

"On the contrary," said Athos, smiling, "he has never been

so much of a musketeer, as since he became an abbé; and you will find him a perfect Galaor. Do you wish me to send Raoul for him?"

"Thank you, count; perhaps he might not be found at home at this hour. But since you think that you could answer for him—"

"As for myself."

"Could you engage to bring him to me at ten o'clock to-morrow, on the Pont du Louvre?"

"Ah!" said Athos, smiling, "have you a duel?"

"Yes, count, a splendid duel—a duel in which you will be engaged, I hope."

"Where shall we go, my lord?"

'To the queen of England, who has commanded me to present you to her, count."

"Does her majesty know me, then?"

"I know you myself."

"An enigma," said Athos. "But never mind: so long as you have the interpretation of it, I ask for nothing more. Will you do me the honour of supping with me, my lord?"

"Thank you, count; but the visit of this young man has, I confess, deprived me of all appetite, and will probably spoil my sleep. What can he be doing in Paris? It is not to meet me that he is come, for he did not know of my journey. This young man terrifies me, count; there is in him a futurity of blood."

"What is he doing in England?"

"He is one of the most ardent followers of Cromwell."

"What could have induced him to support that party? His father and mother were both catholics, I believe."

"The hatred which he feels for the king."

"For the king?"

"Yes; the king declared him illegitimate, deprived him of his property, and forbade him to bear the name of de Winter."

"And what name does he go by now?"

"Mordaunt."

"Puritan, and disguised as a monk, journeying alone on the roads of France."

"As a monk, do you say?"

"Yes; did you not know it?"

"I know nothing but what he has told me himself."

"It was thus, and by accident—I ask pardon of God if I blaspheme—it was thus that he received the confession of the executioner of Bethune."

"Then I understand it all: he has been sent here by Cromwell."

"To whom?"

"To Mazarin; and the queen guessed rightly—we have been anticipated: everything is clear to me now. Adieu, count, till to-morrow."

"But the night is dark," said Athos, perceiving that Lord de Winter was more agitated than he wished to confess, "and perhaps you have no lacquey."

"I have Tony, a good but simple lad."

"Halloo! Olivain, Grimaud, Blaisois, take your muskets, and call the viscount."

Blaisois was that great tall lad, half lacquey, half peasant, whom we saw announcing the dinner at the chateau de Bragelonne, and whom Athos had christened by the name of his province.

Five minutes after this order had been given, Raoul entered.

"Viscount," said Athos, "you will escort his lordship to his hotel, and allow no one to come near him."

"Ah, count," said de Winter, "for whom then do you take me?"

"For a stranger, who does not know Paris," replied Athos "and to whom the viscount will show the way."

De Winter pressed his hand.

"Grimaud," said Athos, "put yourself at the head of the troop, and beware of the monk!"

Grimaud started; then he nodded his head, and awaited their departure, caressing, with a silent eloquence, the butt-end of his musket.

"Till to-morrow, count," said de Winter.

"Yes, my lord."

The little troop went towards the rue St. Louis—Olivain trem

bling like Sosia at every doubtful gleam of light; Blaisois sufficiently bold, because he did not know that they incurred any danger; Tony looking from right to left, but not saying one word, and for a very good reason—he could not speak French.

De Winter and Raoul walked side by side, and conversed together.

Grimaud, who, according to Athos's command, led the party, with a torch in one hand, and his carbine in the other, reached Lord de Winter's hotel, rapped at the door with his knuckles, and when it was opened, bowed to his lordship, without saying a word.

They returned back in the same order. Grimaud's piercing eyes saw nothing suspicious, except a kind of shadow hidden at the corner of the rue Guénégaud and the quay; and he fancied that he had before, on passing, remarked this lurking night-watcher who attracted his eyes. He therefore now hastened towards him; but before he could reach him, the shadow had disappeared down a lane, where Grimaud did not consider it prudent to follow him.

They gave Athos an account of the success of the expedition; and then, as it was ten o'clock, retired to their apartments.

The next morning, on opening his eyes, it was Athos who, in turn, perceived Raoul at his pillow: the young man was completely dressed, and reading a new work by M. de Chapelain.

"Already up, Raoul?" said the count.

"Yes, sir," replied the youth, with some slight hesitation, "I have slept badly."

"You, Raoul!—you slept badly! Something, therefore, has engaged your thoughts?" demanded Athos.

"Sir, you will say that I am in great haste to leave you, seeing that I am as yet scarcely arrived; but—"

"You have, I suppose, only two days' leave of absence, Raoul?"

"On the contrary, I have ten: therefore it is not to the camp that I wish to go."

Athos smiled. "Where then," said he—"at least if it be not a secret, viscount? You are nearly a man, since you have made your first campaign; and you have thus acquired the right of going where you like, without saying anything to me."

"Never, sir," said Raoul; "so long as I have the happiness of possessing you as my guardian, shall I think myself at liberty to free myself from a restraint which is so dear to me. I should much wish, then, to pass a single day only at Blois. Ah, sir, you look as if you were going to laugh at me."

"No, on the contrary," said Athos, suppressing a sigh—"no, I do not laugh, viscount. You wish to revisit Blois, and it is quite natural."

"Then you will allow me!" exclaimed Raoul, quite delighted.

"Most assuredly, Raoul."

"And you really are not displeased, sir?"

"Not at all. Why should I be displeased at what makes you happy?"

"Ah, sir, how good you are!" exclaimed the youth, making a motion as if to fall on Athos's neck, but respect restrained him.

Athos opened his arms.

"Then I may set off directly?"

"When you please, Raoul."

Raoul made three steps, as if to leave the room. "I have thought of one thing, sir," said he: "it is, that I am indebted to the Duchess de Chevreuse for my introduction to the prince."

"And that you owe her some thanks—is it not so, Raoul."

"It appears so to me, sir; but you must decide it."

"Go by the hotel de Luynes, Raoul, and inquire whether the duchess can receive you. I perceive with pleasure that you do not forget the courtesies of society. You will take Grimaud and Olivain."

"Both of them, sir?" demanded Raoul, with astonishment.

"Yes, both."

Raoul bowed, and left the room.

On seeing him shut the door, and hearing his joyous and sounding voice call Grimaud and Olivain, Athos sighed. "It is very soon to leave me," thought he, shaking his head; "but he obeys the law of nature. Nature is thus constituted, and ever looks forward. He decidedly still loves that child; but will he love me less, because he loves others?" And Athos internally confessed that he did not

expect such a prompt departure; but his own feelings were forgotten by Athos, in the consideration that Raoul was so happy.

At ten o'clock, everything was ready for the departure. Whilst Athos was looking at Raoul, who was mounting his horse, a lacquey arrived from Madame de Chevreuse. He was commissioned to tell the count that she had heard of the return of her young protegé, as also of his conduct in the battle, and that she would be much pleased to congratulate him.

"Inform the duchess," replied Athos, "that the viscount is just mounting his horse to proceed to the hotel de Luynes."

Having given fresh instructions to Grimaud, Athos gave Raoul a signal with his hand to depart; and, on reflection, Athos thought that perhaps, after all, there was no harm in Raoul leaving Paris at this period.

HAPTER XLV.

ANOTHER QUEEN WHO DEMANDS ASSISTANCE.

Athos had sent to Aramis in the morning, and had despatched the letter by Blaisois, the only servant he had left. Blaisois found Bazin putting on his beadle's gown: he was this day on duty at Notre-Dame.

Athos had directed Blaisois to endeavour to see Aramis himself. Blaisois, a great awkward lad, who thought of nothing but his instructions, had therefore inquired for the Abbé d'Herblay; and, in spite of Bazin's assurances that he was not at home, had persisted in such a manner, that Bazin flew into a rage. Blaisois, seeing Bazin in his clerical costume, had paid but little attention to his denials, and wished to pass further; imagining that he, by whom his progress was impeded, was gifted with all the virtues appertaining to his dress—that is to say, with patience and Christian charity.

But Bazin, always a musketeer's lacquey when his blood rose,

seized a broom handle, and began to thrash Blaisois, exclaiming, "You have insulted the church, my friend—you have insulted the church!"

At this unusual noise, Aramis made his appearance, cautiously opening his bed-room door.

Bazin now respectfully placed his broom handle on one of its ends, as he had seen the Swiss place his halbert at Notre-Dame; and Blaisois, with a reproachful glance at the Cerberus, drew the letter from his pocket, and presented it to Aramis.

"From the Count de la Fère?" said Aramis; "very well." And he retired, without even asking the cause of this disturbance.

Blaisois returned sorrowfully to the Hotel *du Grand Roi Charlemagne*, and recounted his adventure to Athos, who had inquired whether he had executed his commission.

"Silly fellow!" said Athos. "So you did not say that you came from me?"

"No, sir."

"And what did Bazin say, when he found that you came from me?"

"Ah, sir, he made me all sorts of excuses, and obliged me to drink two glasses of capital Muscat wine, in which he made me sop four excellent biscuits. But, after all, he is a devil of a brute. A beadle! Fie, then!"

"Good," said Athos: "as Aramis has received my letter, he will come, at all events."

At ten o'clock, Athos, with his usual punctuality, was on the Pont du Louvre. He there met Lord de Winter, who arrived at the same time. They waited about ten minutes, when Lord de Winter began to fear that Aramis would not come.

"Patience," said Athos, who kept his eyes fixed in the direction of the rue du Bac—"patience! Yonder is an abbé, who is just giving a cuff to a man, and bowing to a woman. That must be Aramis."

In fact, it was him. A young citizen, who was gaping up at the rooks, stood in his way, and Aramis, whom he had splashed, had sent him ten paces back with a blow of his fist. Almost at the

same moment, one of his penitents had passed him, and, as she was young and pretty, he had bowed to her with a most gracious smile. In a moment Aramis was with them; and there were, as may be imagined, great embracings between him and Lord de Winter.

"Where are we going?" inquired Aramis: "are we going to fight? *Sacrebleu!* I have no sword this morning, and must return home to get one."

"No," said de Winter, "we are only going to pay a visit to her majesty the queen of England."

"Ah, very well," said Aramis. "And what is the object of this visit?" continued he, whispering to Athos.

"Faith, I have not the least idea: perhaps some testimony that they require from us."

"Can it be about that cursed affair?" said Aramis. "In that case I should not care much to go, for it would be to receive an admonition; and since I began to give them to others, I do not relish receiving them myself."

"If that were the case," replied Athos, "we should not be conducted to her majesty by Lord de Winter, who ought to have his share; for he was one of us."

"Ah, yes, that is true. Come along, then."

Having reached the Louvre, Lord de Winter entered first. The door was attended by a single porter only. Being daylight, Athos, Aramis, and the Englishman could perceive the frightful nakedness of the dwelling, which a niggardly charity conceded to an unfortunate queen. Large rooms, entirely despoiled of their furniture—dilapidated walls, on which shone, here and there, patches of old gilt mouldings, which had resisted the desolation—windows, which would not shut, and which wanted glass—no carpets, no guards, no lacqueys—this was what first attracted Athos's attention, and which he silently pointed out to Aramis.

"Mazarin is better lodged," said Aramis.

"Mazarin is almost king," said Athos, "and Madame Henrietta is almost no longer a queen."

"If you would deign to cultivate your genius, Athos," said

Aramis, "I verily believe that you would have more than that poor M. de Voiture."

Athos smiled.

The queen appeared to have awaited their arrival with impatience; for, at the first sound she heard in the antechamber, she advanced to the door to receive them.

"Enter, and most welcome, gentlemen," said she.

The gentlemen entered, and at first remained standing; but on a sign which the queen gave them to sit down, Athos was the first to obey her. He was serious and calm; but Aramis was furious. This regal misery had exasperated him: his eyes sought out every fresh proof of the wretchedness which he discovered.

"You are observing my luxury," said the queen, casting a melancholy look around her.

"Madame," replied Aramis, "I beg your majesty's pardon, but I could not restrain my indignation on beholding a daughter of Henry IV. treated in this manner at the French court."

"This gentleman is not a cavalier, is he?" demanded the queen, turning to Lord de Winter.

"The gentleman is the Abbé d'Herblay," he replied.

Aramis coloured. "Madame," said he, "I am an abbé, it is true; but it is contrary to my inclination. I had no partiality for the little collar; my cassock is only held on by a single button, and I am always ready again to become a musketeer. This morning, entirely ignorant that I was to have the honour of seeing your majesty, I muffled myself up in this dress; but I am not the less a man, whom your majesty will find most devoted to your service, in any thing which you may please to command."

"The Chevalier d'Herblay," said de Winter, "is one of those valiant musketeers of his majesty Louis XIII., of whom I spoke to you, madame."—Then turning towards Athos: "As for this gentleman," he continued, "he is the noble Count de la Fère, whose lofty reputation is so well known to your majesty."

"Gentlemen," said the queen, "some years ago I was surrounded by nobles, treasures, and armies, and, at a wave of my hand, they were ready to serve me. Now look around you—it will doubtless

surprise you—but to accomplish a plan which may save my life, I have only Lord de Winter, a friend of twenty years' standing, and you, gentlemen, whom I now see for the first time, and whom I only know as my countrymen."

"It is quite sufficient, madame," said Aramis, with a profound bow, "if the lives of three men can redeem yours."

"Thank you, gentlemen; but listen to me," she continued: "I am not only the most wretched of queens, but the most unhappy of mothers, and the most hopeless wife. My children, at least two of them—the duke of York and the princess Charlotte—are at a distance from me, exposed to the attempts of the ambitious, and the machinations of their enemies. The king, my husband, drags on such a miserable existence in England, that it is not saying much, when I affirm, that he seeks death as an alleviation. Here, gentlemen, is a letter which my Lord de Winter brought me. Read it."

Athos and Aramis excused themselves.

"Read," said the queen.

Athos then read aloud the letter, in which, as we have seen, Charles demanded the hospitality of France.

"Well?" said Athos, when he had finished the perusal.

"Well," said the queen, "*he* has refused it."

The two friends exchanged a disdainful smile.

"And now, madame, what must we do?" demanded Athos.

"Have you, then, some compassion for so much misfortune?" said the queen, with much emotion.

"I have had the honour of requesting your majesty to state what you wished M. d'Herblay and myself to do for you: we are perfectly ready."

"Ah, sir; you have indeed a noble heart!" exclaimed the queen, with a burst of gratitude; whilst Lord de Winter looked at her, as much as to say,

"Did I not answer for them?"

"But you, sir?" said the queen, turning towards Aramis.

"I, madame?" he replied; wherever the count goes, were it even unto death, I follow, without asking why or wherefore; but when your majesty's service is the question," he added, looking at

the queen with all the grace of his youth, "then I precede the count."

"Well, then, gentlemen," said the queen, since this is the case—since you are willing to serve a poor princess, whom all the world abandons—see what I wish you to do for me. The king stands alone, with the exception of some gentlemen, whom he fears to lose every day, in the midst of the Scotch, whom he distrusts, although he is himself a Scotchman. Since Lord de Winter has quitted him, I am dying with fear for him, gentlemen. Well, then, perhaps I require far too much from you—for I have, in fact, no right to demand anything—go to England, join the king, be his friends, his guardians, march by his side in battle, keep near him in the interior of his dwelling, where snares are daily laid for him, much more dangerous than the perils of war; and in exchange for this sacrifice which you will make me, gentlemen, I promise—not to recompense you, for I believe that the expression would wound your feelings, but—to love you as a sister, and to prefer you to every one, except my husband and children. And this I swear, in the presence of God!" And the queen raised her eyes, slowly and solemnly, towards heaven.

"Madame," said Athos, "when must we depart?"

"You consent, then?" said the queen, with great joy.

"Yes, madame; only your majesty, goes too far, I think, in engaging to overwhelm us with a friendship far beyond our deserts. We are serving God, madame, by saving a king so unfortunate, and a queen so virtuous. Madame, we are yours, body and soul!"

"Ah gentlemen," said the queen, affected even to tears, "behold the first moment of joy and hope which I have experienced for five years. Yes, you serve God; and since my power is far too limited to recompense such a service, it is He who will reward you.—He who reads in my heart all the gratitude that I feel for you. Save my husband—save the king; and although you may not estimate the reward which may redound to you on earth for such a noble action, yet let me hope that I may see you, to thank you for it. In the meantime, I wait with patience. Have you any commission to

give me? I am from this moment your friend; and, since you employ yourselves in my affairs, I ought to occupy myself with yours.

"Madame," said Athos, "I have nothing to ask of your majesty, but your prayers."

"And I," said Aramis, "am a solitary being in the world: I have only to serve your majesty."

The queen held out her hand to them, which they kissed; and she said to Lord de Winter in a low voice—

"If you want money, my lord, do not hesitate one moment: break the jewels I gave you, separate the diamonds from them, and sell them to a jew; they will produce from fifty to sixty thousand livres. Spend all, if necessary; but let these gentlemen be treated as they deserve; that is to say, like kings."

The queen had prepared two letters, one written by herself, one by the princess, her daughter. Both were addressed to King Charles. She gave one to Athos, and one to Aramis, in order that, if any chance should separate them, they might be able to make themselves known to the king. They then retired.

At the bottom of the staircase Lord de Winter stopped. "Let us here separate, gentlemen," said he, "that we may not excite any suspicion; and this evening, at nine o'clock, let us meet at the gate of St. Denis. We will go with my horses as far as they can carry us, and then we will take post. Again, my good friends, I thank you—thank you in my own name, and in that of the queen."

The three gentlemen pressed hands, Lord de Winter went down the rue St. Honoré, and Athos and Aramis remained together.

"Well," said Aramis, when they were alone, "what do you think of this affair, my dear count?"

"A bad one—a very bad one!" replied Athos.

"But you undertook it with enthusiasm."

"As I would always undertake the defence of a great principle, my dear d'Herblay. Kings can only be strong through the nobles, but the nobles can only be great through royalty. Let us then support monarchy, for by that means we support ourselves."

"We are going to get ourselves murdered then," said Aramis.

"I hate the English: they are coarse, as all people are who drink beer."

"Would it be better then to remain here," said Athos, "and to go and take a turn in the Bastile, or in the prison at Vincennes, for having favoured the escape of the Duke of Beaufort? Faith, Aramis, believe me, we have nothing to regret. We avoid a prison and we act as heroes: the choice is easy enough."

"It is true; but under all circumstances, it is necessary to revert to that first of all questions—a mighty foolish one, I allow, but get indispensable—have you got any money?"

"Somewhere about a hundred pistoles, which my farmer sent me, just as I was leaving Bragelonne. But of that I ought to leave about half for Raoul: a young gentleman should live properly. I have only then about fifty pistoles. And you?"

"I? I am quite certain, that, by turning out all my pockets, and ransacking my drawers, I could not find ten louis. But, fortunately, Lord de Winter is rich."

"Lord de Winter is, for the time, actually ruined, for Cromwell has taken possession of his revenues."

"See, now, how useful the Baron Porthos would be in this case," said Aramis.

"And now do I regret d'Artagnan!" said Athos.

"What a fat purse!"

"What a powerful sword!"

"Let us entice them away."

"This secret is not our own, Aramis: we must not admit any one to our confidence. Besides, by such a step we should appear to want confidence in ourselves. Let us lament this to each other, but speak of it to no one else."

"You are right. What will you do from this time till the evening? I am obliged to defer two things."

"And are they things which can be deferred?"

"Forsooth! they must be."

"And what are they?"

"First, a sword-thrust to the coadjutor, whom I met last evening

at Madame Rambouillet's, and whom I found assuming a very singular tone towards me."

"Fie, then! a duel between priests—a quarrel between allies!"

"What would you have, my dear fellow? He is a tilter—so am I. He runs about the streets—so do I also. His cassock encumbers him, and I have quite enough of mine I believe: I verily believe, sometimes, that he is Aramis, and that I am the coadjutor, we so much resemble each other. This species of Sosia annoys and eclipses me. I am quite convinced, that, if I gave him a slap, as I did to that young citizen this morning, it would change the face of affairs."

"And I, my dear Aramis," quietly responded Athos, "am of opinion that it would only change M. de Retz's face: therefore leave things as they are. Besides, you are neither of you your own masters: you belong to the queen of England, and he to the Fronde. Therefore, if this second affair, which you regret that you cannot accomplish, be not of more consequence than the first—"

"Oh! that is very important."

"Then execute it immediately."

"Unfortunately, I am not at liberty to perform it at whatever hour I please. It was for the evening—late in the evening."

"I understand," said Athos, smiling: "at midnight."

"About that time."

"What would you have, my dear fellow? These are also affairs that may be deferred, and you will defer it, especially having such an excuse to give on your return."

"Yes, if I should return."

"If you do not return, of what consequence is it to you? Therefore be a little reasonable. Come, Aramis, you are no longer twenty years old, my friend."

"Much to my sorrow! Ah, if I were only twenty years old!"

"Yes, and a precious number of follies you would commit," said Athos. "But we must separate. As for me, I have one or two visits to pay, and a letter to write. Come, then, to take me up at eight o'clock; or would you prefer my waiting supper for you at seven?"

"Very well. I have twenty visits to make, and as many letters to write."

And upon this they separated. Athos paid a visit to Madame de Vendôme, left his card with the Duchess de Chevreuse, and wrote the following letter to d'Artagnan :—

"My dear Friend,

"I am now setting off with Aramis on an important affair. I would bid you farewell, but have not time. Do not forget that I write to tell you how much I love you.

"Raoul is gone to Blois, and does not know of my departure. Watch over him as much as you can, during my absence ; and should you by chance hear nothing of me for three months, tell him to open a sealed packet, addressed to him, which he will find at Blois, in my bronze casket, of which I send you the key.

"Embrace Porthos for Aramis, and for myself. To our next meeting, perhaps, adieu."

And he sent the letter by Blaisois.

At the appointed hour Aramis arrived. He was dressed as a cavalier, and had at his side that ancient sword he had so often drawn, and which he was more than ever ready to draw.

"Ah, then!" said he, "I am decidedly of opinion that we are wrong to go off in this manner, without a slight farewell to Porthos and d'Artagnan."

"The thing is done, my dear friend," said Athos ; "I have provided for that. I have saluted them, both for you and myself."

"You are an admirable creature, my dear count," said Aramis ; "you think of everything."

"Well, now, have you reconciled yourself to the idea of this journey ?"

"Entirely so ; and, now that I have reflected, I am very glad to leave Paris at this moment."

"And I also," replied Athos. "I only regret that I have not embraced d'Artagnan ; but the demon is so sharp, that he would have guessed our projects."

When supper was over, Blaisois entered. "Sir," said he, "here is M. d'Artagnan's answer."

"But did I not tell you that it required no answer, you fool?" said Athos.

"And therefore I went off without waiting for one; but he sent to call me back, and gave me this." And he handed Athos a little leather bag, round and sounding.

Athos opened it, and first drew out a small note, couched in these terms:—

"My dear Count,

"When any one one journeys, and especially for three months, he never has enough of money. Now, I remember our days of poverty, and send you half my purse: it is the money that I sweated out of Mazarin; therefore do not make a worse use of it than you can help, I beseech you.

"As to not seeing you again, I do not believe a word of it. With such a sword, and such a heart as you have, you must make your way through anything.

"To our next meeting, therefore, and not adieu.

"It is superfluous to say that, from the first day that I saw Raoul, I loved him as if he were my own child; yet believe me that I sincerely pray God that I may not become his father, although I should be proud of such a son.

"Your D'Artagnan.

"P. S. It is of course understood, that the fifty louis which I send belong to you as well as to Aramis, and to Aramis as well as to you."

Athos smiled, and his beautiful eye was dimmed by a tear. D'Artagnan, whom he had loved so tenderly, then still loved him—devoted as he was to Mazarin.

"By my faith, here are fifty louis," said Aramis, pouring them on the table, "all with the picture of Louis XIII. Well, what will you do with this money, count?" Do you mean to keep or return it?"

"I shall keep it, Aramis; and, even if I did not want it, I should keep it. What is so frankly and heartily offered, should be as frankly and heartily accepted. Take twenty-five, Aramis, and give me the other five-and-twenty."

"So much the better. I am glad that you agree with me. There, now, let us be off."

"When you please. But have you no servant?"

"No; that ass Bazin has had the folly to become a beadle, as you know, so that he cannot leave Notre-Dame."

"Very well, then you shall take Blaisois, for I do not know what to do with him, as I have got Grimaud."

"Willingly," said Aramis.

At this moment Grimaud appeared at the door. "Ready," said he, with his usual laconism.

"Let us depart, then," said Athos.

The horses awaited them, ready saddled. The two friends mounted, as did the lacqueys. At the corner of the quay they met Bazin running, quite out of breath.

'Ah, sir," said he, "God be praised! I am in time."

"What is the matter?"

"M. Porthos has just quitted the house, and has left this for you, saying that it was of great consequence, and must be delivered before your departure."

"Good," said Aramis, taking a purse which Bazin held out to him: "what is this?"

"Stop, M. Abbé, there is also a letter."

"You know that I told you, if you called me anything but chevalier, I would break your bones! Give me the letter."

'How will you read it?" said Athos; "it is as dark as an oven."

"Wait," said Bazin. And striking his steel, he lighted a small twisted wax taper, which he used for lighting his wax candles.

By the light of this taper, Aramis read—

"My dear d'Herblay,

"I hear from d'Artagnan, who saluted me on your part and on that of the Count de la Fère, that you are going on an expedition that may last perhaps two or three months. As I know that you do not like asking of your friends, I make you an offer. I send two hundred pistoles, which you may dispose of, and return when

you have the means. Do not be afraid of putting me to inconvenience: if I want money, I will send for it from one of my chateaux; seeing that at Bracieux I have twenty thousand livres in gold. Therefore, if I do not send you any more, it is because I fear that you would not accept of a larger sum.

"I write to you, because you know that the Count de la Fère imposes a kind of restraint on me, in spite of all my endeavours, although I love him with all my heart; but of course it is well understood, that what I offer to you, I at the same time offer to him.

"I am, as I hope you well know, your most devoted,

"Du Vallon de Bracieux de Pierrefonds."

"Well," said Aramis, "what do you say to that?"

"I say, my dear d'Herblay, that it is almost sacrilege to doubt Providence, when one has such friends."

"Therefore——"

"Therefore, let us share Porthos's pistoles, as we have shared d'Artagnan's louis."

The division being made by the light of Bazin's taper, the two friends pursued their journey. A quarter of an hour afterwards, they were at the gate of St. Denis, where Lord de Winter met them.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

IN WHICH IT IS PROVED, THAT THE FIRST IMPULSE IS ALWAYS THE BEST.

The three gentlemen took the road to Picardy—that road so well known to them, and which recalled to Athos and Aramis, some of the most fantastic recollections of their youth.

"If Mousqueton were with us," said Athos, on reaching the spot where they had the dispute with the paviours; "how he would shudder on passing by this place. Do you recollect, Aramis? It was here that he was struck by that famous ball."

"Faith, and I would permit him to do so," said Aramis; "for I feel myself shuddering at the recollection. There, just beyond that tree, is a little spot, where I verily thought that I was dying."

They continued their journey. And anon it was Grimaud's turn to ransack his memory. Having reached the front of the inn where he and his master had made such an enormous banquet, he went up to Athos, and pointing to the air-hole of the cellar, said to him —"Sausages!"

Athos began to laugh; and this folly of his youth appeared to him as amusing as if any one had related it as performed by another person.

After a journey of two days and a night, they reached Boulogne on a most beautiful evening. It was then comparatively a deserted town, entirely built on the height. What is now called the lower town, was not then in existence.

On reaching the gates of the town—"Gentlemen," said de Winter, "let us here separate, as we did in Paris, to avoid suspicion. I know a tavern which is but little frequented, but of which the master is wholly devoted to me. I will go there, where, also, I expect to find letters. You, on the contrary, must go to the first hotel in the town—*l'Epée du Grand Henri*, for instance—there refresh yourselves, and, in two hours, proceed to the jetty, where our barque should be waiting for us."

Matters being thus arranged, Lord de Winter proceeded along the exterior boulevards, to enter by another gate; whilst the two friends went in by that opposite them, and at about two hundred yards further on, they found the hotel indicated.

The baited their horses, without having them unsaddled. The lacqueys supped, for it began to grow late; and the two masters, very impatient to embark, ordered them to follow them to the jetty, with strict injunctions not to exchange a single word with any one whatever. It may be readily imagined that this order referred to Blaisois only; for, as regarded Grimaud, it had for a long time become quite superfluous.

Athos and Aramis went down to the harbour. By their dress

covered with dust, and by a certain air of careless ease, which always distinguishes men accustomed to travel, the two friends attracted the attention of some loungers. They saw one, more particularly, upon whom their arrival appeared to have made a remarkable impression. This man, who had first attracted their attention for the same reason that had drawn upon them the observation of others, was walking up and down the jetty with a melancholy air; but from the moment that he saw them, he did not cease to regard them attentively, and appeared to be most anxious to address them.

He was young and pale; with eyes of such a doubtful blue, that their pupils appeared to contract and dilate, like those of a tiger, according to the colours they reflected. His gait, in spite of the slowness and irregularity of his pace, was stiff and formal. He was dressed in black, and armed with a long sword, which he carried gracefully enough.

Having reached the jetty, Athos and Aramis stopped to look at a small boat moored to a post, and all ready prepared, as if it was waiting for some one.

"It is ours, no doubt," said Athos.

"Yes," said Aramis; "and the sloop yonder, with her sails set, has much the appearance of being that which is to carry us to our destination. Now," he continued, "provided de Winter should make us wait, it will not be very amusing to remain here, for there is not a single woman to be seen."

"Hush!" said Athos: "some one is listening."

In fact, the gentleman who was walking up and down during this examination by the two friends, and who had passed frequently behind them, suddenly stopped when Lord de Winter's name was mentioned; but as his countenance betrayed no emotion on hearing this name, he might have stopped entirely by chance.

"Gentlemen." said the young man, bowing with much ease and politeness, "pardon my curiosity, but I perceive that you are come from Paris, or, at least, that you are strangers to Boulogne."

"Yes, sir, we are come from Paris," replied Athos, with equal courtesy; "can we afford you any information?"

"Sir," said the young man, "would you be so kind as to tell me if it be true that Mazarin is no longer minister?"

"That is a singular question," said Aramis.

"He is, and he is not," replied Athos; "that is to say, whilst the half of France rejects him, by means of intrigue and promises he causes himself to be supported by the other half; and that may last some time, do you see."

"Then, sir," continued the stranger, "he is neither a fugitive nor in prison."

"No, sir; not at present, at any rate."

"Gentlemen, accept my thanks for your politeness," said the young man, taking his departure.

"And what do you think of this inquisitive person?" asked Aramis.

"Why, that he is either a countryman, who does not know what to do with himself, or a spy who seeks information."

"And yet you answered him in this manner?"

"Nothing would have justified me in answering him otherwise. He was polite to me, and I was the same to him."

"But yet, if he was a spy—"

"And what can a spy do? We are no longer living in the times of Cardinal Richelieu, who closed the ports, even on a simple suspicion."

"Still you were wrong in answering him as you did," said Aramis, following the young man with his eyes, until he had disappeared behind the sand-hills along the shore.

"And you," said Athos, "forget that you were very imprudent in mentioning the name of Lord de Winter. Did you observe that it was on hearing that name that the young man stopped?"

"For which reason you were more especially bound to tell him to go about his business, when he addressed you."

"A quarrel?" said Athos.

"And how long is it since a quarrel has frightened you?"

"A quarrel always frightens me, when I am expected anywhere, and when this quarrel may prevent my reaching the place. Besides, shall I confess one thing to you? I also was anxious to have a near view of this young man."

"And why so?"

"Aramis, perhaps you will laugh at me, or at least you will say that I am always harping on the same string, and that I am the most fearful of visionaries."

"Well, and what then?"

"Whom do you think this young man resembles?"

"An indifferent or a handsome likeness?" demanded Aramis.

"A good likeness, at least, so far as a man can resemble a woman."

"Ah, by Jove!" exclaimed Aramis, "you make me think. No, my dear friend, you are no visionary; and, now that I reflect—yes, you are actually right—that mouth, delicate and compressed, those eyes, which appear always to follow the emotions of the soul, and not of the heart—he is some illegitimate offspring of her ladyship's."

"And you laugh, Aramis?"

"Merely from habit, that is all; for I protest that I should not relish, any more than you would, to meet that serpent in my path."

"Ah, there comes de Winter, now," said Athos.

"Good," cried Aramis; "only one thing is now wanting—we shall have to wait for our lacqueys."

"No," said Athos, "I can see them; they are following his lordship. I can distinguish Grimaud by his stiff neck and long legs; and Tony is carrying our carbines."

"Ah! are we going to embark at night?" demanded Aramis, casting a glance at the west, where the sun left nothing but a golden cloud, which appeared gradually to be extinguished, as it bathed itself in the sea.

"It is most probable," replied Athos.

"The fiend!" replied Aramis. "I dislike the sea too much by day, to be enamoured of it by night. The murmur of the waves, the roaring of the winds, the horrible motion of the vessel—I confess that I prefer the convent at Noisy."

Athos gave one of his melancholy smiles; for whilst apparently listening to what his friend said, it was evident that he was thinking of something else. He went towards de Winter, and Aramis followed.

"What is the matter with our friend?" said Aramis; "he looks

like one of Dante's condemned spirits, whose neck Satan has just broken, whilst he is looking at his claws. What the plague is he looking back at so earnestly?"

On perceiving them, Lord de Winter quickened his pace, and came up to them with unusual rapidity.

"What is the matter with you, my lord?" inquired Athos, "and what has put you so much out of breath?"

"Nothing," replied de Winter, "nothing; and yet I fancied, that, on passing near those sand-hills—" And he again turned round.

Athos looked at Aramis.

"But let us be off," continued de Winter—"let us be off. The boat must be waiting for us, and yonder is our sloop at anchor. You can see it from hence. I wish I was on board of her." And he again turned round.

"Ah, now," said Aramis, "you have forgotten something?"

"No, I was thinking of a matter which had previously engaged my attention."

"He has seen him," said Athos to Aramis, in a low voice.

They had reached the steps which led to the boat. De Winter first made the lacqueys go down with the arms; the porters followed with the luggage; and then he began to descend himself. At this moment Athos perceived, on the sea-shore, parallel to the jetty, a man who quickened his pace, as if anxious to be present at their embarcation at the other side of the harbour, distant about twenty yards. In the midst of the shadows which began to descend, Athos fancied he could distinguish the young man who had accosted them.

"Oh, oh!" said he, "can he really be a spy, and would he oppose our embarcation?"

But if this was really the stranger's intention, since it was now somewhat too late to put it into execution, Athos descended the stairs, without, however, losing sight of this man, who, to make a short cut, had got on to a sluice.

"He really has a design upon us," said Athos; "but let us embark; and once out at sea, let him come there if he will." And Athos leaped into the boat, which was immediately cast loose from

its moorings, and began to leave the jetty under the impulse of four strong rowers.

But the young man followed, or rather preceded, the boat, which was obliged to pass between the end of the jetty commanded by the lantern which had been just lighted, and a rock that jutted out. They saw him climb up the rock, so as to stand above the boat as she was passing.

"Ah, then," said Aramis to Athos, "this young man decidedly is a spy."

"What young man?" demanded Lord de Winter, turning round.

"Why he who has followed us, who has spoken to us, and who is now waiting for us down yonder."

De Winter followed the direction of Aramis's finger. The lantern illumined the little strait through which they were just going to pass, as well as the rock upon which the young man was standing, with bare head and arms crossed.

"It is he!" exclaimed Lord de Winter, seizing Athos's arm—"it is he! I fancied that I saw him, and I was not mistaken."

"And who is *he*?" demanded Aramis.

"Her ladyship's son!" replied Athos.

"The monk!" said Grimaud.

The young man heard these words. It even seemed as if he was going to throw himself over, so close did he stand to the very edge of the rock, bending over the sea.

"Yes, it is me, uncle—me, her ladyship's son—me, the monk—me, the secretary and friend of Cromwell! And now I know you—you and your companions."

There were, in that boat, three men who were certainly brave, and whose courage no one would have dared to impugn; yet, at this voice, at this accent, at this gesture, they felt the cold shudder of fear run through their veins. As for Grimaud, his hair actually bristled on his head, and the perspiration trickled from his brow.

"Ah!" said Aramis "is that the nephew, is that the monk, is that her ladyship's son, as he himself has said?"

"Alas! it is so," murmured de Winter.

"Well, then, wait," said Aramis. And with that terrible coolness

which he exhibited on all great emergencies, he seized one of the carbines which Tony held, cocked it, and took a steady aim at the man, who remained standing on the rock, following them with hand and eye like the condemning angel.

"Fire!" cried Grimaud, carried away by his feelings.

Athos threw himself on the barrel of the carbine, and arrested the shot.

"The fiend take you!" cried Aramis; "I had him so completely at the end of my carbine that I would certainly have lodged the ball full in his chest."

"It is quite enough to have killed the mother," said Athos, in a hoarse voice.

"The mother was an execrable wretch, who had wounded us all, either personally, or through those we loved."

"Yes, but the son has not injured us in any manner."

Grimaud, who had risen to see the effect of the shot, fell back in utter despair, clasping his hands.

The young man burst into a fit of laughter. "Ah, and it is really you!" he cried: "it is really you! Now I do know you!"

His harsh laugh and threatening words passed over the boat, borne along by the breeze, and were lost amid the deep shades of the horizon.

Aramis shuddered.

"Be tranquil," said Athos. "What! are we no longer men?"

"Yes," replied Aramis; "but that is a demon; and just ask the uncle if I should have been wrong in relieving him of his dear nephew?"

De Winter only answered by a sigh.

"All would have been over," continued Aramis. "Ah! I much fear, Athos, that you made me do a foolish thing, with your wisdom."

Athos took Lord de Winter's hand, and, endeavouring to turn the conversation—"When shall we reach England?" he demanded.

But Lord de Winter did not hear his words, and did not reply.

"Here, Athos," said Aramis, "perhaps there would still be time. See, he is still in the same place."

Athos turned with reluctance. The sight of this young man was evidently painful to him. In fact, he was still standing on the rock, the light from the lantern forming a sort of halo around him.

"But what can he be doing at Boulogne?" demanded Athos, who, being so deep a reasoner, always sought for the cause, caring but little about the effect.

"He was following me—he was following me," said de Winter, who this time heard Athos's voice, which now corresponded with his thoughts.

"To follow you, my friend," said Athos, "it would have been necessary for him to be aware of our departure; and, besides, in all probability he preceded us."

"Then I cannot understand anything about it," said the Englishman, shaking his head, like a man who thinks it useless to endeavour to struggle against a supernatural power.

"Positively, Aramis," said Athos, "I begin to think that I was wrong in not letting you do as you wished."

"Hold your tongue," said Aramis: "you would make me cry, if I could."

Grimaud emitted a dull grumbling sound, much resembling a stifled roar.

At this moment the boat was hailed from the sloop. The pilot, who was seated at the helm, replied, and the boat approached the vessel. Men, lacqueys, and baggage were instantly on board. The master had only waited for his passengers to set sail; and scarcely had they set their foot on deck, before they put her head towards Hastings, where they were to land.

At this moment the three friends involuntarily cast a last look at the rock, where the contour of the threatening shadow which pursued them was still visibly defined.

Then came a voice, which even yet reached them, bearing with it this last threat—"We shall meet in England, gentlemen!"

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME OF TWENTY YEARS AFTER.

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